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# HERODIAS

*A DRAMATIC POEM*



# HERODIAS

## NOTICES OF THE AMERICAN EDITION.

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"I waited for 'Salome' (now called 'Herodias') to arrive. It came two days ago, I think. It was good to a surprise. But Channing carried off my book before I had done with it, and he is the best electrometer or pyrometer for the poetic flame I know, and he gave a good report. I found the book already named in the newspapers, but they will give no right guess of its merits for a time."—*RALPH WALDO EMERSON to his brother.*

"As a story, the dramatic interest is drawn out with ingenuity, from the few incidents contained in the sacred narrative, and is sustained with skill to the end. The poetical execution is of a high order. . . . I think 'Salome' ('Herodias') indicates the possession of very high poetical talent."—*HON. EDWARD EVERETT to a friend.*

"'Salome' ('Herodias') is a production of more than marked ability,—it is a broadly conceived, genially executed, oftentimes a truly superb poem. The repentance of Salome has a broad lyrical and musical sweep which seems like an opera of grand passions when the trivial associations of the opera are forgotten."—*CHARLES G. LELAND*, in the *Continental Monthly*.

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"Bears evidence of the highest poetical ability."—*New York Evening Post* (Mr. Bryant's).

"The portraiture of Herodias is a masterly creation."—*New York Leader*.

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"A poem of great vigour and originality."—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.

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# HERODIAS

*A DRAMATIC POEM*

BY

J. C. HEYWOOD

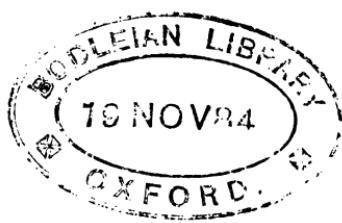
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“ But when Herod’s birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist’s head in a charger. And the king was sorry : nevertheless for the oath’s sake and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.”

SAINT MATTHEW.

SECOND LORD.

FIRST CAPTAIN.

SECOND CAPTAIN.

FIRST COURTIER.

SECOND COURTIER.

A VOICE.

PRINCE OF THE POWERS OF THE AIR.

A VOICE FROM THE FAR HEIGHTS.

PRINCE OF THE POWERS OF THE DEPTHS.

CHORUS, ROMANS AND JEWS.

SEMI-CHORUS, ROMANS.

SEMI-CHORUS, JEWS.

OFFICERS, COURTIERS, ATTENDANTS, ETC.

SCENE:—Jerusalem.

TIME:—The night in which John the Baptist was beheaded.

DURATION OF ACTION:—From sunset to sunrise.

# HERODIAS.

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## PROLOGUE.

A DUNGEON.

JOHN BAPTIST *in a trance ; Heaven opened ; the heavenly host gathered before the throne.*

ALL THE HEAVENLY HOST.

LIGHT invisible ;  
Light-giving Darkness inscrutable ;  
Source unprovided, Source all-receiving ;  
Boundless Duration which, yearless, enduring not still is ;  
Sternness unwavering, limitless ; infinite, movable Tenderness ;  
Omnipresent and sleepless Benevolence ; Vengeance asleep omnipresent ;  
Ever creating and restless Creator, from finished creation resting forever ;  
Justice that seeth not, feeleth not ; feeling for all and all-seeing Pity ;  
Hidden and fathomless Mystery, mysteries hidden revealing ;

Measureless Grace all-pervading ; Charity all-centring ;  
 Love invincible, all-overcoming ;  
 Holiness, Holiness, Holiness ;  
 Father of Christus,  
 Glory, majesty, victory and honour be unto Thee  
 Forever and ever and ever.  
 Amen.

A VOICE.

He hath gone to the vineyard alone ; is there no one to  
 help ?

ARCHANGELS.

There is none ; He must gather alone.

VOICE.

He treadeth the wine-press alone ; is there no one to  
 help ?

ARCHANGELS.

There is none ; He must tread it alone.

VOICE.

The Dragon assaileth Him alone ; is there no one to  
 help ?

ARCHANGELS.

There is none ; He must conquer alone.

VOICE.

Grief's archers sore press Him alone ; is there no one to  
 help ?

ARCHANGELS.

There is none ; He must pierced be alone.

## VOICE.

Death's sorrows o'erwhelm Him alone ; is there no one to help ?

## ARCHANGELS.

There is none ; He shall vanquish alone.

## VOICE.

Hell's legions assault Him alone ; is there no one to help ?

## ARCHANGELS.

There is none ; He shall triumph alone.

## ALL THE HEAVENLY HOST.

Alleluiah !

He shall receive

The kingdom, the majesty, the power and the glory,  
Forever and ever and ever.

Amen.

## CHERUBIM.

Encircling worlds that in their courses roll  
And sweep the sky from zenith to the pole ;  
Empyreal orbs that in the welkin shine,  
Unfading foot-rests of the Cause divine ;  
Glad morning stars that sing when each day's sun  
'Ginneth its round as was the first begun ;  
Flame-shooting cloud-cars with their thunder-sound  
That ford the air and quake the solid ground ;  
Rebellious seas that caged reluctant and roar,  
And bellowing oceans breaking down the shore ;  
New-formed creations by ~~an~~sparing hand

Flung into space or beckoned from the land ;  
 All these Thy might and majesty proclaim,  
 But Thou in them dost magnify Thy name  
 And Thy great glory less, Most Holy One,  
 Than in the mission of Thine Holy Son.

## ALL THE HEAVENLY HOST.

Hosanna !

Glory and majesty, victory and honour be unto Thee  
 Forever and ever and ever.

Amen.

## SERAPHIM.

Comets that sweep along the lightning's path ;  
 Thy blazing meteor-messengers of wrath ;  
 Rivers of light that roll on starry sands  
 Athwart the heavens to worlds fresh from Thy hands,  
 O'erwhelming with their waves chaotic night,  
 Fulfilling Thy command, "Let there be light ;"  
 Auroral floods of flame that up the north  
 Flow towards Thy throne and show Thy glory forth ;  
 Winds rushing from their caves to blast and slay ;  
 Life-bearing breezes driving death away ;  
 Careering hosts of storms in upper air  
 That in fierce chorus shout Thy praises there ;  
 And primal colours in their bending frame ;  
 All these Thy boundless love and power proclaim,  
 But magnify Thy name, Most Holy One,  
 Less than the mission of Thine Holy Son.

## ALL THE HEAVENLY HOST.

Hosanna !

Glory and majesty, victory and honour be unto Thee

Forever and ever and ever.

Amen.

A VOICE.

A victor He shall return, and joyful with Him—

ARCHANGELS.

The ransomèd captives of earth.

VOICE.

Triumphant He shall return, and joyful with Him—

ARCHANGELS.

The exiled, for His sake, of the Earth.

VOICE.

Almighty He shall return, and joyful with Him—

ARCHANGELS.

The poor and the weak of the earth.

VOICE.

Avenger He shall return, and joyful with Him—

ARCHANGELS.

The oppressed, for His sake, of the earth.

VOICE.

To judgment He shall return, and joyful with Him—

ARCHANGELS.

The just, for His sake, of the earth.

## VOICE.

Redeemer He shall return, and joyful with Him—

## ARCHANGELS.

His saints, the redeemed of the earth.

## ALL THE HEAVENLY HOST.

Alleluiah !

He shall receive

The kingdom, the majesty, the power and the glory  
Forever and ever and ever.

Amen.

Alpha, Omega ;

Ancient of Days Sempiternal ;

Trust ever changeless, immortal, life-giving ;

End without any beginning ; Beginning all endless ;

Bruised and Reviled and Rejected, the Mocked, the  
Accused, the Condemnèd.

High-Priest self-offered for merciless foemen, enduring  
and making atonement ;

Friend agonized, interceding ; sole Mediator unfailing ;  
tremendous Avenger ;

Prince of Peace, Wonderful, Counsellor, Son of Man,  
Mighty Lord God of Sabaoth ;

Pascal Lamb passively dying ; arisen Christ living for  
ever ;

First Thought and Last Thought ; Space filling, Heaven-  
ruling I AM ;

Final Hope ; Final Help ; Final Rewarder ;

Virgin-Born, human Immanuel ;

Son of the Father,

Glory, majesty, victory and honour be unto Thee  
Forever and ever and ever.

Amen.

ARCHANGELS.

And Thou shalt reign—

ALL THE HEAVENLY HOST.

Forever and ever.

ARCHANGELS.

King of kings—

ALL THE HEAVENLY HOST.

Forever and ever.

ARCHANGELS.

And Lord of lords—

ALL THE HEAVENLY HOST.

Forever and ever.

King of kings

And Lord of lords

For ever and ever

And ever.

Amen.

*The Vision passes.*

JOHN BAPTIST.

My work is finished ; way made for the Word.  
Earth heareth silent Thine approach, O Lord.  
The stars from their firm places move aside,  
Cerulean gates of Heaven open wide,  
The King of Glory from His throne descendeth,

The darkling age of forms and shadows endeth.  
For He shall claim among the sons of men  
His kingdom, drive the usurper to his den,  
Baptize His subjects with the Holy Ghost,  
And seal them members of His heavenly host ;  
Unbar tenebrious prisons of the soul,  
And set it free from sin's supreme control ;  
Banish all doubts to everlasting night,  
Bring immortality and life to light.  
My work is finished ; way made for the Word.  
Earth trembleth with thine awful tread, O Lord.

My work is finished. Yet ere I depart  
Show me Thyself again, and let my heart,  
Filled with Thy certainty, question no more,  
But Thee incarnate, doubting naught, adore.  
The mysteries of prophecy unfold,  
Realize prophetic visions seen of old,  
And let me understand the mighty plan  
Regeneration of degenerate man ;  
How Thou wilt raise this people, lift their horn,  
And let them be no more the heathen's scorn,  
Avenge them of their foes and bring them home,  
And safely shelter them from wrath to come.  
Mine hour approaches, give me faith in Thee,  
And with the Holy Ghost baptize Thou me.  
My work is finished ; way made for the Word.  
I have seen Thy salvation ; take me Lord.

*Enter Salome.*

SALOME.

All hail ! good master. From the sentinels

Of fierce intolerance ; from my mother's watch  
By stealth and unattended have I escaped  
To bring thee some refreshment.

JOHN BAPTIST.

Thank thee, child.  
I have refreshment that thou know'st not of,  
And I am strong in strength sent from on high.  
Yet is thy presence balm to the weak parts  
Of my humanity.

SALOME.

How went the day ?  
Laden with tediousness ? Did the light hours  
Go crouching down beneath a weight of grief  
Mournfully lagging ?

JOHN BAPTIST.

Nay, the day was not,  
Nor were there hours. Time now, for me, is passed,  
Save when thou call'st me back to look on it  
In thee. This is the last. I must go hence.

SALOME.

Where wilt thou go ?

JOHN BAPTIST.

Unto my dwelling-place.

SALOME.

Where is thy home ?

JOHN BAPTIST.

On earth within the hearts  
Of those who follow me.

SALOME.

And hast thou one  
Which is not on the earth? Where is it then?

JOHN BAPTIST.

Where thou at length shalt come.

SALOME.

I will go with thee.

JOHN BAPTIST.

Thou canst not.

SALOME.

I can all that woman may.  
Who will supply thy wants?

JOHN BAPTIST.

I shall have none.

SALOME.

My comprehension cannot grasp thy scope.  
Whither wilt go? Thou canst not leave this cell,  
Unless the king in justice bid thee forth.

JOHN BAPTIST.

I know thou canst not understand me now;

---

Thou wilst in time. But this I plainly say,  
Thou shalt not listen to my voice again.

SALOME.

Ah, speak not so ; thou art but sad and faint.  
Behold what I have brought ; refresh thyself—  
Nay, take the wine ; and see, how rich these figs !  
Wilt thou not let their blushing beauty tempt  
Thy lips to embrace them ? Thou canst not refuse  
These flowers. I saw them smiling in their dreams  
And caught them ere they waked. With pleading look,  
And trembling with affright they gaze at me,  
Tears glittering on their cheeks and in their eyes.  
They too are sad, for they are captives now.  
Take fruit and flowers, and then thou wilst not say  
Thy handmaid shall not visit thee again.

JOHN BAPTIST.

My child, I will not eat ; but from His throne  
Jehovah seeth thine offering, to bless  
The heart which prompted it. Yea, I am sad,  
My soul is very sorrowful for thee.

SALOME.

For me ! Nay, for thyself. A prisoner thou,  
I free as air and happy as were these flowers.  
But cheer thee. I will try to set thee free.

JOHN BAPTIST.

And thou shalt do it.

SALOME.

Then how I will rejoice !

JOHN BAPTIST.

Nay, thou shalt mourn.

SALOME.

And thou?

JOHN BAPTIST.

I shall rejoice.

At length, thy sorrow shall be turned to joy :  
Blessed the sorrowful, they shall be glad,  
And they who mourn, they shall be comforted.

SALOME.

Why should I mourn ?

JOHN BAPTIST.

For thine eternal good.

SALOME.

Thou talk'st but mystery ; unfold thyself.

JOHN BAPTIST.

Blessed be they who mourn. Lovest thou me ?

SALOME.

Thou knowest that I love thee.

JOHN BAPTIST.

Keep my words.

SALOME.

They are enshrined in me.

JOHN BAPTIST.

Lovest thou me ?

SALOME.

Now thou dost mock me ! must I say again  
That I do love thee ?

JOHN BAPTIST.

Follow thou the Christ.

SALOME.

Where is He ?

JOHN BAPTIST.

He shall come to thee.

SALOME.

I will.

JOHN BAPTIST.

Lovest thou me ?

SALOME.

Nay, must I swear to thee ?

JOHN BAPTIST.

Follow the Christ, and come whither I go.

SALOME.

Wilt thou not cease to speak in paradox ?

JOHN BAPTIST.

Yea, I will speak no more ; have I not said  
Thou shalt not listen to my voice again ?

SALOME.

'Twas but the wind of jest, that thou might'st see  
How strong were my affections grown to thee.  
I leave thee now, but take with me thy words ;  
For, as thou know'st, King Herod with his lords  
Keepeth a feast, and in the revelry,  
Against my will, I must a sharer be.  
But on the morrow I will come to tell  
Thee of it all, and cheerful make thy cell.  
The shadows, trembling, beckon me away :  
Jehovah guard thee till the dawn of day.

JOHN BAPTIST.

My daughter, may God's benediction rest  
Upon thy soul, and keep thee pure in heart !  
Believe, and in thy sorrows thus be blest.  
The Christ to thee eternal peace impart !

*Exit Salome.*

CHORUS, *passing in the street.*

The sun dismounteth, day expires,  
The colour from its full-flushed face  
To ash hue paling ; veilèd fires  
In slow procession from their place,  
The adytum of the great universe,  
Come solemnly and spread a pall,  
Deep pall of night, upon dead day,  
Then lift their veils to watch. O'er all

The orient moon assumeth regent sway,  
While stars the praises of the lost rehearse,  
Mounting the sky to look upon her lord and counting  
Him present whom afar she seeth and still more brightly  
mounting.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS, *in the air.*

As the sun, so the life of the Son for a time shall depart ;  
As the day in the night, so His body be laid in the tomb ;  
As the moon mounteth up to the skies, so faith riseth to  
heaven,  
To see Him, and shine in His beams, and know that He  
liveth.  
Like the stars, His disciples shall watch through the  
dark till He cometh,  
Then shall lose themselves in, and thenceforth be a part  
of His brightness.



I.

BANQUETING ROOM IN HEROD'S PALACE.

HEROD and HERODIAS seated on thrones. *Lords,  
Captains, Courtiers, etc.*

FIRST LORD.

THIS is a fair, high day. King Herod meaneth  
We shall have cause to wish him many such.  
Didst thou come early to the banquet room ?

SECOND LORD.

Yea, I came in among the very first.  
Full brightly and swiftly hath the revel sped,  
And, comet-like, drawn on so fair a train,  
So rich a galaxy of pulchritudes  
Itself is lost to the eye of contemplation  
In its bright tail increasing to the end.  
Dull Satisfaction would await no more  
Did not its guide and mother, Expectation,  
Forever hungering and ne'er content,—  
Which it doth follow as a timid child,  
But never goeth before, nor long time leaveth,—  
Foster its appetite to a fever awaiting  
A course of beauty never yet imagined,  
Reserved for delicate palates till the last.

## FIRST LORD.

How sayest thou? What? A thing elysian  
Which cunning messengers have won and brought,  
More skilled than Orpheus? Or hath fraudulent Hermes  
Been tempted to betray some new invention,  
Some special, dear ebriety of the gods?  
Or will warm Venus show her person here?  
For surely all the richest flowers of earth,  
Its choicest viands, draughts, and sweetest sounds,  
The fairest nymphs and most enticing sirens  
From every clime already grace this feast.

## SECOND LORD.

So all must think, and none would ever dream  
Of brighter, more alluring loveliness.  
Yet here, where winds which saunter through the room  
Go drunk with music hence, stagger and reel,  
Like bacchantes, under festooned garlands green;  
Where the atmosphere, by perfume overgone  
From rose-bud lips of every blushing hue,  
Carnation cheeks, and waving, lily hands,  
Is coy, and will not let its breath be caught;  
A perfume sweeter than arose of yore  
From Hesperis, or than earth's lips exhaled  
In virginal young life, ere bitten and parched;  
Here, where the veillèd love-emmoving light,  
As from an amorous beauty's half-closed lids,  
Of these rich myriad lamps, whose jewels blaze  
And seem themselves to generate the beams,  
Serveth to show decoying, dangerous depths  
Of dark, dissolving eyes, and snowy breasts

Rolling like seas with passion's fullest tides ;  
Here, where the freshest floral wreaths grow dim,  
Faded by warmth of woman's glowing charms ;  
Here, where elysian joys invite the soul  
To revel in an ecstasy of bliss,  
I waiting stand, unblessed, till I behold,  
Transcendent fair, like shell-borne Aphrodite,  
The crowning glory of the feast appear.

*Another part of the room.*

FIRST CAPTAIN.

Hast seen this daughter of Herodias ?

SECOND CAPTAIN.

I have not ; but my memory containeth  
Rich tales of her surpassing loveliness ;  
Each tale a mirror, showing each a form,  
Each form compact of Fancy's sweetest parts ;  
Each part, each form, each mirror showing naught  
But one sweet, changing, changeless, charming whole,  
As in the mirror of the month is seen  
Chaste Dian's phases, Dian still the same.

FIRST CAPTAIN.

For thee it will be well if, when she cometh,  
These fancy-forms do not elude thy sight,  
Thy magic mirrors turning to base metal,  
And thy chaste Dian fade not from thy skies  
To leave thee groping.

## SECOND CAPTAIN.

I myself do fear  
Lest vanish my supreme divinity,  
This image rumour-made within my heart,  
Chased from its shrine by hateful verity.

## FIRST CAPTAIN.

List ! list ! the music !—She at length is here !  
*Curtains are withdrawn and Salome glides in dancing.*  
By all the immortal gods ! I swear those screens  
Are of celestial groves the folding gates !  
Surely the beauty from Olympus stoopeth,  
Which floateth there ! What features ! Ah ! what form !  
What grace ! She moveth on the air !

## SECOND CAPTAIN.

By Jove !  
I do believe that this is mere enchantment !

## FIRST CAPTAIN.

Look at the king ! His fierce, admiring eyes  
Devour her every motion. Wouldst thou think  
His head could easy rest upon his couch  
This night ? Soul-tossing, love-engendered spirits  
Will they not drive smiles from his countenance,  
Contentment from his heart, as sails are driven  
From ships by southern gales, or fruits from shores  
Of islands by tempestuous, angry waves  
Which rage upon the great, the midland sea ;  
And thus his sleep, which beareth him through night

As a good ship, be wrecked, he left to toss  
And reach the coast of morn as best he may  
By Hercules ! if I were but a king  
My kingdom were too small a pay for love,  
Or e'en possession, of that more than queen.  
For her I could be Paris !

## SECOND CAPTAIN.

Or Leander ?

Hast thou yet heard her voice ? Sure it must be  
Like liquid silver bubbling from its fount  
Through a cleft ruby ; though she need not speak,  
For every motion talketh golden-tongued.

## FIRST CAPTAIN.

Dost note the sad expression of her face ?  
The downcast, curtained eyes ? She looketh as  
She came to dance for pity more than praise ;  
Led on by sorrow, not by vanity.

## SECOND CAPTAIN.

Thou readest well. That melting countenance,  
Those lids weighed down with pleas, eyes full of them,—  
A jarring word would cause an overflow,—  
Lips trembling with the rush of prisoned sobs,  
And smiles which, spite of urging, wait, these spell  
With potent charms. Not willing did she alight.  
It was just now heard a neighbour say  
That she was very loath to dance this night  
Before the king : but yet because he wished it,  
Obedient also to her mother's will,  
She turned aside her flowing tears and came.

## FIRST CAPTAIN.

Why this unwillingness?—and she so fair!  
Why hath she never graced the court before?  
Doth modesty abhor, or pride disdain,  
And bid her shun with fear, with scorn neglect  
Worship gallant, such as awaiteth here?

## SECOND CAPTAIN.

For her the pure air of a maiden-bower  
And tender converse of thoughts virginal,  
The courtiers of her fancy, are more inviting,  
While they to please this gentle queen adorn  
Love-dreams and myths all beautiful.

## FIRST CAPTAIN.

Perchance

Hath keenest subtlety, the cunning wight,  
Secured a hiding-place where cupids sport,  
In that sweet dale between twin hillocks white,  
Whose crested summits nightly blush beneath  
The setting rays from those soft-shining orbs  
When they in slumber sink as sink warm suns  
Into mid ocean at the close of day.  
And thence he whispereth her ambitious heart  
That, if she would have fame, unbounded fame,  
She should not blind Imagination's sight,  
Nor bind its tongue, nor spoil its ready pen,  
Nor dull the colours which its pencil spreadeth  
By cold realities that, Gorgon-like,  
Turn warm, luxurious Fancy into stone.

## SECOND CAPTAIN.

Nay, look again :—that tiny, timid ear,  
Which frightened nestleth in those heavy locks,  
Like an affrighted dove in foliage  
Of a vine-arbor waving in the breeze,  
Would flee in terror whisperings so sly.

## FIRST CAPTAIN.

Her mother it is who striveth then to make  
Her daughter famèd as the flower which bloometh  
But once within its life, a century,  
And then, mayhap, on such a night as this.

## SECOND CAPTAIN.

Her mother may dare all, for from her heart  
Nature ashamed long since was driven away  
By those relentless demon conquerors,  
The glittering, armed array of woman's arts,  
And vainly sought to hide its burning blush  
Beneath the shading lids or bosom's snow  
Of her, by sophistry, untutored child.

## FIRST CAPTAIN.

With all her woman craft she well must know,  
Though not the fair flower's beauty may give fame,  
The mystery of its bloom when copulate  
With fecund wonder surely will beget  
Fame's substance, rumour, with conjecture winged  
And echo-tongued to multiply itself.  
Haply the maiden, in her royal pride,  
Would such a blossom be, and not for worlds

The violet, beloved and known by all,  
Placed in the bosom, carried on the heart,  
But sought with curiosity, gazed at  
With reverent awe, or spoken of with fear  
By none. Yet she is wondrous beautiful !  
A floweret ? Nay ! A viney full of fruits !

SECOND CAPTAIN.

She waveth on the melody as floateth  
A rapturous symphony upon a zephyr !

FIRST CAPTAIN.

Buoyed by her pride and woman's vanity !

SECOND CAPTAIN.

Thou wrong'st her ! In those palaces, from which  
The rulers of her soul look on the world,  
There is no pomp of vanity or pride,  
But purest maiden modesty there reigneth,  
And beauty concentrate of beauties all,  
Which taketh form in thought and word and act :  
Blended in holy harmony these rule,  
While o'er her cheeks their mingling colours float,  
And wave and rise and fall upon the breeze  
Of her heart's gentle breathings.

FIRST CAPTAIN.

Since she came

Perforce, to make contentment discontent,  
I can forgive her. From this time I see  
As seeing not all others of her sex.  
I have faced the sun and gazed at it too long ;  
And now, even in the night, shall see no stars,  
But everywhere the sun, the sun, the sun !

*Another part of the room.*

## FIRST COURTIER.

There is a whisper moving in the air,  
Like a faint mist which is and then is not,  
Which even while thou observest thou wilt think  
That thou dost see it not, no form espying.  
This whisper saith, at least seemeth to say,  
Or this, just now, it seemed to say to me,  
Ere I could see 'twas naught, that a high place  
In the young princess' favour hath been found  
By prophet John, whom they surname the Baptist.  
This whisper hath not dared approach the queen.  
It talketh faintest murmurs, lest she hear.  
It skulketh with the courtiers ; but abroad,  
Far from the mother, stalketh as a stentor.  
For 'tis well known Herodias hateth him,  
And he now lieth in ward at her request.

## SECOND COURTIER.

Hast seen this aqueous philosopher ?

## FIRST COURTIER.

Once. At the even-tide, when softening air  
My spirit had unmanned to melancholy,  
Forth from the town I strayed alone and sought  
A solitary place where unobserved  
I might at pleasure humour the strange mood.  
The occidental sun, warm from his course,  
Had lain him languid down, and round his bed  
Crimson and golden curtains closely drawn.

An amber mist rose from his smoking coursers  
As they, with drooping necks and heaving flanks,  
Drunk up the cool west wind and slaked their thirst.  
Anon the moon full blushing left her couch,  
Where Phoebus all the morn had fondled her,  
And smiling walked the azure fields of heaven  
Among her grazing star-flocks, seeing naught  
But that her lord awaiteth in the west.  
Silence in mid-air listened to the sound  
Of music from a choir of far-off spheres,  
While Rest stood on the heights and with her wand  
Called Slumber down upon the sentient world,  
Slumber which, like Penelope, at night  
Ravelleth webs of toil knit through the day.  
I turned from gazing on the heavens and saw  
This same John Baptist musing, or in prayer.  
A bunch of wild-flowers in his half-closed hand  
Reposed upon his lap ; his look was turned  
Toward the Hebrew temple, and, I thought,  
From time to time words issued from his lips.  
As I approached he saw me and arose,  
And I was led by the sweet dignity,  
Which mantled him from his majestic head,  
The placid, manly beauty of his face,  
The deep and thrilling tones that on his lips  
Seemed lingeringly to dwell, then heavenward went,  
The strange, soft light which flooded his deep eyes,  
To tarry for a while and list to him  
While he—

## SECOND COURTIER.

Behold ! she kneeleth to the king,  
As Iris smiling bendeath to the earth.

Darker than storm-cloud groweth the ieful queen  
As she perceiveth Herod's fierce applause,  
And noteth the enraptured look with which  
He gazeth on her child.—List ! lo, he speaketh !

**HEROD.**

Well done, our peerless one, our conqueror,  
Incomparable queen of beauty, grace,  
And love. Ask what thou wilt and it is thine.  
Tax now our bounty, even to the half  
Of this our fair domain, and it is thine.  
We swear it by the ever-living gods !

## II.

### GARDEN OF THE PALACE.

SEXTUS *and* ANTONIUS.

SEXTUS.

THAT is her chamber-shrine where enamoured vines  
Up to the windows mount like lovers bold,  
And carry clustering blossoms in their hands,  
And whisper words, sweet words with fragrant breath  
In through the casement. It is void and dark,  
As is my life when she is out of sight.  
That is her chamber, if the lying rogue,  
To whom I paid a mina for his news,  
Did not impose on me. But sit we here  
While I await impatient her return.  
And when we see that temple all aglow  
With her bright presence then thou shalt depart.

ANTONIUS.

She loveth still? Thou hast unshaken faith?

SEXTUS.

Faith! yea, in her forever! Faith? Why man,  
I tell thee faith is weak, is air, is naught  
Compared with mighty certainty I feel  
That she is changeless as the changeless truth.

She is herself the very truth of love.  
I could as soon blaspheme the gods as doubt  
Her constancy. I know no difference  
Between such doubt and never-dying death.

## ANTONIUS.

No absence, then, like dreary, beating storms,  
Or dragging fogs thick chargèd with decay  
Hath severèd, or with corrosive tooth  
Asunder gnawed love-chains thou hast riveted  
On her caprices and inconstancy ?

## SEXTUS.

Nay, absence hath no rust can rust love's gold,  
Nor can it gnaw such chains as those which bind  
My love to me, but only show their strength.  
Long time it is, ah me ! since last her eyes  
Told me how much she loved, her gentle voice,  
Assenting, echoed "love," her heart applauding.  
My heart stood still to listen ; then it sang  
A pæan, wild with joy, and sent in haste  
Hot messengers through every burning vein,  
And on each trembling nerve to every part,  
Rushing with shouts and calling loud " She loveth."

## ANTONIUS.

Thou talk'st like lovers, lovers talk like fools.  
That must have been a fearful day for thee.  
Thy heart was a volcano belching fire,  
And those hot messengers were lava streams.  
'Tis wonderful how thou could'st have escaped  
A general conflagration. When was this ?

## SEXTUS.

'Twas at December's solstice—

## ANTONIUS.

Fortunate

For thee the weather was so cold.

## SEXTUS.

Since then

Through the long winter of absence have I seen  
Nor heard aught of her ; but I come with Spring—  
The laughing Spring which now hath just been born,  
Whose great god-mother Nature at its birth  
O'erspread recumbent Earth parturient  
With drapery of varied, festive green,  
Embroiderèd with beauty blossoming  
In every form, in every colour rich ;  
The whole perfumed with rarest odours fresh  
From fields Olympian, distilled in dews  
And scattered by the mist-clad morning hours.  
She calleth to rejoicing her domains  
With laughing voice, heard thunder-like afar,  
And biddeth seneschals with splendors meet  
Build wide triumphal arches to the skies,  
Brilliant with stones of every primal hue,  
In semicircles bending vast and grand  
Before each cloudy castle in the heights  
Ethereal ; from pillared forest halls  
And lofty mountain bastions imminent  
Hang out her leafy banners blossom-starred ;  
In every vale and each responsive grove  
Collect orchestral hosts, concentual choirs

To fill the vault with anthems jubilant,  
While echoes, rushing on from every side,  
Dance in mid-air, and from empyreal hills  
Fall, like the mingling songs of singing birds,  
The sounds of bells from shining astral towers.  
So I, with joy's harmonious confusion,  
By every sign and sound of gladness mingled,  
While Nature holdeth this high festival,  
Would celebrate my joy-inspiring Spring,  
The end of absence, and would find my cure  
From sickness of impatience in its presence.

## ANTONIUS.

Mayst thou be cured ! for thou indeed art sick.

## SEXTUS.

I seek my love, and from her lips will hear  
Confessions which, for me, fill the universe  
With all the music of a thousand worlds  
Commingled in one anthem, sweeter tones  
Than harp of muse or siren ere gave forth,  
Which float on every zephyr to mine ears,  
“I love thee ! how I love thee, my beloved !”

## ANTONIUS.

Safely delivered of this gale of words,  
A hot simoom to any man of sense,  
I presently will minister to thee  
A cooling draught.

## SEXTUS.

There is no need. I am chilled,  
Even to the marrow, by thine atmosphere.  
Thou art winter like.

## ANTONIUS.

Of thy dear will I speak.  
If she seem constant, seeming still to love,  
Some mighty obstacle doth intervene  
Between the purpose of her stubborn will  
And its accomplishment. Call back thy wits !  
Safely concealed beneath yon Cupid's locks,  
Or in his quiver cased and hidden there,  
Behold Perversity, who driveth Love  
To conflicts obstinate ; and his hot zeal  
The unobservant crowd will still declare  
To be but proofs of Love's persistency,  
Love's deathless ardour ; Love the while grown chill,  
Drooping with weariness, ready to die,  
Yea, dropping lifeless at the very goal.

## SEXTUS.

If my dear seem still constant ! If she seem !  
A truce to old parables ! She doth not seem !  
There is no seeming in a soul so true.  
She is Love's angel !

## ANTONIUS.

Nay, if thou dost think  
Her subject only to that blind god's will ;  
If thou dost think this pertinacity,  
Endurance resolute of all the pains,  
The pangs, the miseries, of so-called love—  
Which from its sufferings is passion called—  
But manifest affection's constancy,  
Why out upon thee for a maudlin fool !

And yet thou art wise—would that I too could dream  
And catch bliss blinded ! Yea, I envy thee,  
And can forgive thy folly. May the gods  
Preserve it to thee ! Folly it is most sweet,  
For a most sweetly foolish thing, a woman.  
Only be fool enough never to see  
What reason draggeth to thy averted eyes ;  
Only be fool enough never to hear  
What reason iterateth in thine ears,  
Conclusions damning from most damned facts ;  
Only be fool enough never to feel  
The lash of jealousy which reason plieth,  
And thou may'st count thyself the most blest fool  
That ever aired his folly on the back  
Of the errant butterfly, a woman's love.  
Yet mind thy folly do not get unhorsed  
And break its neck and reason take its seat.  
Trust in Love's constancy, and still believe  
That thy love's charms are consecrate to thee.  
I will not waken thee from such a dream.

## SEXTUS.

Thou canst not waken me ; I do not sleep.  
Nor rouse me from my dreams ; I do not dream.  
Thou didst conjecture well ; I frankly own it.  
Yet thy poor argument is jester's wit,  
A random shaft. Laughing philosopher  
Thou shouldst be named ; for though thou dost not  
smile,  
But art as grave as images on tombs,  
Thou mak'st thy fellows laugh, and thus in them  
Dost all thy sourness unto sweetness turn.

We separated are, my love and I,  
By highest wall of adamantine hate,  
Upon whose dark and frowning battlements  
Suspicion's sentinels keep their sharp watch.

ANTONIUS.

And thou shalt wait long time, ere they will sleep.

SEXTUS.

Her mother doth not deign to look on me,  
Save with disdain and fierce lip-curling scorn.

ANTONIUS.

Giving thy merits steeped in vinegar  
To cool her daughter's fever ; stay her not.  
I am no doctor if she make the cure.  
Thou art a handsome youth. Faith, I believe  
That she would hate thee less if thou didst woo  
Herself and not her child.

SEXTUS.

Something is in me,  
Which turneth her ambition into spite  
When it but looketh on me.

ANTONIUS.

Were I judge,  
From the loud baying of thy most fair parts  
They have aroused that fierce game jealousy.

SEXTUS.

Nay, stick to thine own trade, philosophy !

Thou art no sportsman and thine ear is bad.  
Follow the hounds thus and thou wilt be lost  
In some vile thicket.

ANTONIUS.

There is an alchemy  
Which changeth tender impulse into scorn ;  
The common people call it poverty.

SEXTUS.

Oh ! that I have infused in my blood,  
And by inheritance made doubly mine.  
Father and mother both left it to me,  
Not in their wills, but with their testaments.

ANTONIUS.

Grandmother Nature, then, adopted thee  
And well-nigh spoiled her darling with fair gifts  
And rich allowance of all virtues rare,  
Which thou dost like a cunning miser keep.  
And thou dost well. Thou wouldest have more applause  
If thou didst waste them more.

SEXTUS.

Perhaps, from fools,  
Not friends, and such applause would make me deaf.

ANTONIUS.

Loudest applause doth mostly come from fools.  
There was a time when virtues were a dower  
Greater than kingdoms ; but that time is dead.  
Though hale and hardy it still began to die

When the hundred-headed earth-worm, Luxury,  
'Gan gnaw its vitals, weave a gauzy web  
Stronger than iron fetters on its limbs,  
Envenoming pure air with baneful breath.

## SEXTUS.

If I have virtues they are not mine own.  
I may not spend them lightly if I would.  
I got all virtues from mine ancestors.  
My fathers were of that old Roman stock  
Which lovèd liberty, that sterner sort  
Which would not kiss the dust ; that nobler sort  
Which could not be enslaved. They lovèd Rome.  
They loved not Cæsars ; and when Cæsar sought  
Rome to possess, and when Rome Cæsar's was,  
Then Rome for them a ravished mother was,  
Cæsar the ravisher.

## ANTONIUS.

Thou speak'st too frankly.  
These walls may have no ears, but I have a tongue.

## SEXTUS.

A soldier thou, my comrade ; 'tis enough.  
This mother's honour quick to vindicate  
My father's father thought it not too dear  
To give all he enjoyed and add his life.  
It was in vain, and that same Roman name  
Thou now mayst read stuck high upon a pole,  
Branded conspirator and left to rot,  
By the vindictive hangman tyranny.  
My father, still a youth, withdrew himself

Into a valley far removed from Rome,  
Or that which had been Rome, and lived alone  
With the young Roman girl who called him spouse,  
Who was the only one could bring a smile  
To his stern features, place a bow of light  
On the dark storm-cloud hanging o'er his brow  
Ready to give forth thunders.

ANTONIUS.

Mournèd he?

SEXTUS.

He was too proud ; for in him lived the worth,,  
Nobility and lofty dignity,  
The stern contempt for creeping sycophants,  
The mighty scorn for fawning flatterers  
And hatred of imperial despotism  
Concentered of an incontaminate race  
Of Roman freemen. So have I been told.

ANTONIUS.

Couldst thou not note this greatness for thyself ?

SEXTUS.

I never saw him ; ere I lived he died.  
Giving me life my mother gave her own.  
I knew not whence I came. I never knew  
Mother, nor father, nor the love of kin.  
The first man like, I all uncared for grew  
And, like him, felt alone ; for my poor nurse,  
Who thought to do me good by rearing me,  
Died too and left me ere I was a youth.

Then heard I tell of great Germanicus,  
And then I went with him unto the wars.  
Whene'er his godlike eye rested upon me  
I thought myself like Mars armipotent.  
Foes melted at my glance. The battle done,  
I slunk into myself, went to my tent,  
And wondered at me and at my fruitlessness,  
That honours ripen not in sunny youth,  
But intempestive sprout to shiver in snows  
Upon the brow of age and barren die.  
I murmured that life's vigorous vines in spring  
Could not mature and yield their luscious juice  
To cool Spring's feverous thirst. I cried, Give now  
The goblet brimming with concentrate life,  
And from its inspiration let me breathe  
Thoughts all in flames, or flames in act concrete  
To dazzle the astonished world and draw  
The plaudits of all men, that I may be  
Placed in their hearts and live no more alone.  
Let me flash out and warm the frozen world  
With my great, glowing brightness, then content  
I will a blasted crater be for ever !  
'Twas the delirium of loneliness  
O'ermastering my boy's wisdom. I had not learned  
That greatness is the loneliest of things.

## ANTONIUS.

Why, so it is, yet great men covet it.  
But having in themselves some parts of all men,  
When they are great enough to achieve it greatly  
Each is a system sphered within himself  
And hath no need of outer satellites.

## SEXTUS.

I questioned if I ever could be great  
And win the love of great Germanicus.  
He was my god, and often would his eye  
Be on me when I felt but saw it not,  
Until, one day, with strangely tender words  
Embracing me, my valour he extolled,  
And in his voice there was a sound of tears,  
As in the south wind cometh sound of rain.  
He bade me to his tent, and there I dwelt,  
And thus abided with him till he died.

## ANTONIUS.

Having such honour I had asked no more  
But to have died with him.

## SEXTUS.

Could that have been  
I had not outlived Rome nor ever felt  
The bitterest bitterness of bitter grief.  
The noblest he, the best, last Roman was.  
In him died Rome for me, and I thenceforth  
No more a Roman, evermore a man,  
All countries were my country, every land  
My home, the world my dreary dwelling-place.  
So that nor country, home, nor dwelling-place,  
Nor aught but mine own solitude had I.

## ANTONIUS.

That love of country is only egotism  
Disguised in virtue's vestures and the name  
By one form borne of Protean selfishness.

## SEXTUS.

I found the earth was very much alike  
 Where'er I went, or e'er rapacious man  
 Had ravished Nature of her virgin charms.  
 I saw but valley, mountain, hill and dale,  
 Meadow and forest, flowers and singing birds,  
 Rivers and lakes, seas fawning on the lands,  
 And islands sea-borne floating noiselessly.

## ANTONIUS.

Thou art right. Man loveth self and self's own works,  
 And love of country calleth this—for shame !  
 Party of patriot virtues claimeth all,  
 And factions name their spirit patriotism ;  
 It verily is with the disguise torn off.—  
 I will not hinder thee ; I like thy tale.

## SEXTUS.

Thou knowest how he died, Germanicus.  
 With all the ardour of a passionate soul  
 I vowed eternal vengeance on his foes  
 Who durst usurp the office of the fates  
 And hasten him to Hades in his bloom.  
 I joined the northern hordes that I might fight  
 Against Rome? Nay ; against her enemies,  
 His murderers most foul, most treacherous.  
 Thus taken captive while I sought to die,  
 Laden with chains, along the Sacred Way  
 I marched, a traitor branded, to my fate.  
 Music's wild bursts sprang quivering in the air  
 Like jets from golden founts ; applauding shouts  
 Struck the swift winds and made the breezes reel,

While conquerors' wreaths like fluttering flocks of birds  
Light on the car triumphal from each side.  
A Roman vestment marked me as I passed  
A special object for the frenzied hate  
Of throngs unfeeling hurling savage jeers  
Like stones and firebrands on a fettered foe.

## ANTONIUS.

The coward brutes ! Wolves were more generous !

## SEXTUS.

But as these injuries rained upon mine ears  
I felt my stature grow, my heart expand.  
I knew a power of virtue in my breast  
That made me like a god ; and then I smiled.  
I seemed to fill all space, and with contempt  
Looked down on human malice, scorn and rage,  
In soul invulnerable, fearing naught  
Which human hate could do. Thus I passed on.  
That night in Cæsar's palace Pleasure gave  
To mocking Mirthfulness a marriage-feast  
And mad Intoxication with a torch  
Played Hymen's part and joined the unholy two.  
Lewd Wantonness attended on the bride,  
And lustful License sat as groomsman there.  
And they essayed to ornament the revel  
With beauteous half-draped forms, with amorous eyes,  
With mazy motions of lascivious grace  
And with seductive strains of music soft.  
By sacrilegious hands sweet Modesty,  
Was forced, deep blushing, from her sacred shrine,  
Her veil torn off, her beauties all exposed

While on her glared gloating Concupiscence.  
And Chastity, compelled to be a guest,  
Closed her pure lids and clasped her pleading hands  
In vain entreaty to be sent away.

## ANTONIUS.

O Rome ! O Rome ! the rot is at thy core !

## SEXTUS.

The morrow came. The amphitheatre,  
A monstrous crater, hissed and shrieked and moaned  
Surging and heaving with the fiery life  
Which mounted up, up to the very top  
As climbing blazes seethe and writhe and sough.  
And at the bottom Death, with threatening growls,  
Anon terrific roars and quaking cries,  
In every cavern, in a hundred forms  
Lying in wait, glared out with blood-shot eyes  
From sunken sockets dark, and gnashed its teeth  
With thundering crash, meanwhile the scorching sand  
Like lava burnt instinct with agony.  
I stepped on the arena, stood alone.  
In all that flaring life there was no torch,  
No tongue of flame had kindled in my soul  
Affection's glow, nor lit the cheering light  
Of gentle friendliness, love's sympathy.  
I stood alone. I felt as if all Rome  
With all her generations gazed at me.

## ANTONIUS.

The mighty dead are present at great deeds  
To which they gather as the gods at feasts.

## SEXTUS.

Near by me seemed to stand those giant shades :  
He who could bear to be death's instrument  
On his own offspring, for a broken law,  
And, by his duty braced and his proud soul,  
Wavered even less than death ; he who could hold  
His hand all sensible in jaws of fire  
Till it was eaten off by stinging teeth,  
And from the ordeal shrink less than the flame :  
He who of his own body made a tower,  
And of his mighty sword a battery reared,  
And of his trusty shield a rampart high,  
To give recoil to the enemies of Rome  
Till father Tiber, on his tawny back,  
Should bear the bridge away which, treacherously,  
Astride his shoulders ingress stood to make  
For fierce hostility and ravening war ;  
Then who, ere the angry foe could obviate,  
In heavy armour swam the river home :  
The mighty three who on their brazen shields  
Their sweet lives proffered, at the bid of Rome,  
To sturdy three of Alba, should these have  
Appreciation which outvalued those  
In valour's keen discernment : he who plunged  
With his good steed into the black abyss :  
And those, Cornelia's jewels, robbed from her,  
Torn from their caskets, but not lost to Rome,  
By an insensate mob ; with those brave souls  
Who in the Senate, on the ides of March,  
Proved Roman mothers faithful to their lords.  
Thus, then, I stood, and fear slunk shamed away

And hid itself from me. I did not try  
To show I felt no terror, stand erect,  
Folding my arms and bracing out my feet  
And putting on the many flimsy tricks  
Which the ass cowardice, when in a fright,  
So oft mistaketh for a lion's skin ;  
I stood as I would stand to talk with thee—

## ANTONIUS.

Would I had been there to have applauded thee !

## SEXTUS.

And waiting patiently looked at the beasts  
Which lashed their sides and bit the iron bars  
And gloated on me from their hideous dens.  
And then I gazed above me at the crowd  
And calmly scanned its agitated waves,  
Till in the imperial gallery a form  
Which was not of the earth, nor sea, nor air,  
But seemed all of my dreams to be compound ;  
A form of so surprising loveliness  
It were as if the earth and sea and air  
To make it up had given lavishly  
Their qualities of loveliness most rare  
From their most secret treasure-houses brought ;  
A form that in itself compacted held  
More winning grace than ever goddess wore,  
Pure woman's beauties, richest womanhood,  
The gentle tenderness and tender love,  
The loving sympathy, strong fortitude,  
Weak strength and weakness strong, and modesty  
Which while repelling most, doth most invite :

A form of all the fairest, woman's form ;  
A form which mastered me, made me forget  
Life, death, past, future, pleasure, pain, joy, grief  
The while its eyes looked downward into mine  
Until I felt them meet mine midway down,  
And in their greeting kiss all sense was lost.

## ANTONIUS.

Ah ! it was there, then, that thy wits were lost !  
And yet thou livest ! Did the Emperor see  
Thou wert an innocent and pity thee ?

## SEXTUS.

In that one instant's meeting of our eyes  
All objects sensible seemed to dissolve  
And like a vision pass to nothingness.  
Meantime interior being conscious grew  
To full existence limitless of joy.  
This for a moment ; then, as if ashamed,  
Her eyes withdrew themselves and stooping hid  
Behind warm lids, as suns behind fair clouds,  
While all her face was lighted with a blush  
Like that which on the face of Hesperus  
Is called at twilight by young Night's first kiss  
A moment more and she was on her knees,  
Resistless impulse of a generous soul  
In the pure bosom of a gentle girl  
O'ermastering maiden shame and timidness,  
Before Tiberius—"His life ! His life !"  
I heard no more, I saw no more—enough !  
I felt the strength of all the Titans swell  
The knotty sinews of my naked arm.

I could have rent even Death himself in twain.  
And now I grapple him, for I am knit  
In deadly conflict with the king of beasts.  
Slow suffocating silence, stygian air,  
Hangeth around the strife, the throng benumbeth  
For one dread minute ; then through upper space  
From that piled cloud of faces fulminate  
Reverberating thunders, peal on peal.  
And now they roll away and seem to die  
In labyrinthine caverns of mine ears,  
Which grow interminable as I fall  
Insensible a conqueror on the sand  
Before swift messengers of Cæsar's will  
Can bear me forth to life and liberty.

## ANTONIUS.

Come, let me hug thee,—ay, thou hast made me rich  
By drawing forth these samples of rare gems  
Forgotten in some crevice of my spheres.

## SEXTUS.

From such beginning grew apace our love,  
Nurtured from time to time by stolen words  
And richly watered with the maiden's tears,  
Refreshed by sigh-heaved breezes, made more strong  
And rooted firmly by rough storms of spite.  
For ere this love-tree brought forth other fruit  
Than tear-drops, heart-aches, long drawn breaths, sweet  
    dreams,  
Sad wakings, lonely watchfulness and fasts  
And leaves verse-covered ending all in rhymes,  
A thoughtless, tell-tale youth, Ingenuousness,

Though free from malice, did us mighty harm ;  
For he betrayed us to Herodias  
As she her daughter with sharp questions plied.

ANTONIUS.

Then thou wast sent away ?

SEXTUS.

Yea, I was sent,  
By Cæsar's order, straightway to the army,  
Where by my valour, I attained the rank  
Which brought me near to thee, made all forget  
The virtue which they called my treachery,  
And gave me hope that with its glowing breath  
Fame would consume the animosity,  
Or thaw the obdurate purpose, strong and cold,  
With which the mother wardeth me from mine.

ANTONIUS.

Thou lendest faith too generously, for hope  
Is a false prophet, known to thee by this ;  
He never prophesieth aught but good.

SEXTUS.

I know him false, I need not arguments.

ANTONIUS.

Why, then how hast thou faith in thy love's love ?  
While this enclosing barrier remaineth  
That caged elf, that cross Perversity,  
Like cur in leash will struggle to be free :  
Undo the bars and thou shalt straightway see  
Desire to stay hath fettered liberty.

## SEXTUS.

A truce, a truce. I pray thee rail no more.  
If thou hadst ever loved how couldst thou ask,  
"She loveth still? thou hast unshaken faith?"  
I tell thee faith is love and love is faith!  
Thou never hast loved or thou wouldest never have  
asked  
If constant lover have a constant faith.

## ANTONIUS.

I have loved!—loved a more than paragon!  
Fairer than heaven, more pure than stellar light,  
As morning beautiful, as evening tender,  
Modest as silent, thickest veiled night,  
But warm in love as a midsummer's day.  
She trusted me, she loved me as her god.  
She thought that I would do no wrong, nor could.  
She gave me blushing lips which did not blush  
So much as her soft cheeks; she gave her arms  
To twine about my neck as clinging vines,  
While rose-tipped fingers from her lily hands  
Like pendant fuschia blossoms trembling hung.  
She gave her eager, palpitating heart,  
Into my breast close nestling to mine own,  
And with the twilight of her sinking lids  
Shed dews ecstatic on mine ardent soul.  
So much did trust me, did so much desire  
To make me happy, sacrifice herself  
And prove the rich perfection of her love,  
In hearty fulness casting out all fear,  
To give me something more than all she was,

And all she had, and all she ever hoped,—  
 Had I been offered for that sweet girl's love  
 The eternal empire of a rotund world  
 I would have spurned the bribe into the wastes  
 Of wildest chaos in undiscovered space  
 To perish vilely there.

## SEXTUS.

Now thou dost rave  
 As rave strained bacchanals insane with drink.  
 'Twas passion, 'twas not love.

## ANTONIUS.

I tell thee, man,  
 She was my world ; my sunlight her regard,  
 My blushing morn and eve her tender cheeks,  
 My heaven her orbs, my midnight her gemmed hair,  
 My fountains, tenderness in her deep eyes,  
 My clouds her sadness and her tears my storms,  
 Her lips the coral of my summer sea,  
 Her teeth the foam strewn by its laughing billows,  
 Her breath my air, my breezes her soft voice,  
 My two rose-gardens her two rounded breasts,  
 My vale of Tempe, vale of sweet repose,  
 The vale between those fragrant garden mounds  
 Lying in sweetest shade ; my dwelling-place,  
 My home, my citadel, her loving heart.

## SEXTUS.

Ah, thou wast happy. She deserved thy love.

## ANTONIUS.

Yea, she deserved it, as all women do,

And I was happy as all men who love.  
I was more full of lying faith than thou ;  
And when we parted with her sighs she sobbed  
That she could ne'er forget—they all say that  
As they “mamma” say ere they go alone—  
Another ne'er could love, not even a friend  
Should share her thoughts, by entering desecrate  
The temple to me only consecrate,  
Her heart, where her affections waiting stood  
To offer sacrifice. Her arms she flung,  
Her lovely, loving arms about my neck  
And strained me to her bosom, as the earth  
Fast-kissing oceans huggeth to her breast,  
While flowing tears, two sighing cascades, fell  
Adown the flowery heights of her fair cheeks.  
I wept, less for mine own than for her grief,  
And my great tears rained down upon her brow  
And lay a coronal of crystal drops,  
Fresh manhood’s purest tears on purest brow.  
I would that I could then and there have died,  
That she had strangled me in that embrace  
Through very ecstasy of passionate grief.  
Thus would her love have openèd the gates,  
And led me to Elysium doubting naught.  
Pillowed upon her breast I then had said  
That lingering good-night, that last good-night,  
And my departing shade would have returned  
To say once more good-night !

## SEXTUS.

Alas ! poor friend !  
Thy selfishness is but too natural.

'Tis so much sweeter to be mourned than mourn !  
And then she died ere thy too late return ?

## ANTONIUS.

She died ? Thou mock'st me, by the gods ! She died ?  
By Hecate, I'll tell thee how she died !  
Leaving my human nature there with her,  
My loving nature, all my tenderness,  
I went with my brave soldiers to the field.  
Her love had turned me to a conquering god,  
Or absence from her to a vengeful fiend.  
I sought but to be terrible to foes  
And thus to kindle round my storm-girt brow  
Fame's dazzling halo ; when I should return  
That I might place it on her blushing front  
And say I have won this changeless crown for thee.  
I saw upon the distant, serried foe  
The gleam of armour, as the light of flames  
Flaring along the fore-front of a storm.  
Then arrows fell like flights of shooting-stars,  
And glancing spears like blazing comets rushed,  
And flashing swords like fiery meteors fell.  
I maddened in the fury, exultant laughed.  
I wrested glory from the grasp of Death.  
I forced Death's self to place upon my head  
Wreath after wreath with his own grudging hands.  
I made Death's mighty voice my deeds proclaim,  
And when he set on me I drove him back  
Howling with rage to his infernal caves.  
I carved my name on pyramids of slain  
And sent it down to Pluto's shuddering realm

Shrieked out in chorus by the flying souls  
Of hosts barbarian, and all for her.

## SEXTUS.

I wronged thee ; thou hast loved.

## ANTONIUS.

Have I not, man ?

And thus I wrought my immortality,  
And dyed it royal purple with king's blood,  
And proudly wore it as a kingly robe  
To leave behind me, when beneath the earth  
I shall at length descend, with blazon shown  
I' the gallery of Fame for reverent gaze  
Of ages yet to come. Thus did I work  
For three long years, ere the triumphant host  
Of Cæsar's legions, from the blood-stained snows  
Of northern victories, bent their mighty tread  
Toward the seven-seated, blood-gilt throne  
Of their great mistress, all-controlling Rome.  
When drawing nearer her I could not bide  
The spoil-encumbered army's stately march,  
But with the winds I hastened on before  
To outrun Rumor in its rapid course  
And be the first to tell my love the tale,  
The first to see the ruddy light reflected  
Of my great glory in her blushing cheeks  
And the deep waters of her beaming eyes ;  
The first to see her tremble faint for joy ;  
The first to feel the flutterings of her heart ;  
The first to feel her short and panting breath ;  
The first, the only one to see these signs,

The first, the only one to feel these proofs,  
The first, the only one to understand  
The cause and meaning of these signs and proofs--  
These signs and proofs sacred to rapture and me.  
Like valour speeding to the fields of love  
I hastened on, impatient as the storm  
By desert heated and by south wind driven.  
Horses beneath me melted in my course  
And dew-cold fields grew parched and fiery hot.

**SEXTUS.**

Ay, thou hast loved as only true men love.

**ANTONIUS.**

At last I neared the place—in nurse's arms  
A child, a baby twelvemonths old, perchance,  
Stretched out its little hands—it was her child !  
I took it to my bosom, fondled it  
While my great heart was turning into stone.  
The currents of my blood were bound in ice,  
Thought was congealed, the world inanimate,  
All save that little child which pulled my beard,  
Smiled in my face its treacherous mother's smile.  
And then she stood before me in her babe,  
And then I kissed it in an agony,  
And then it laughed aloud and said “papa.”  
But suddenly a mist came in mine eyes.  
Betwixt the child and me a manly form,  
A bearded Roman's form, with mocking smile,  
Eyes haughty and defiant, seemed to rise  
And with a look of triumph gaze on me.  
Beside myself I flung away that child,

Her little child, and fled, and fled, and fled.  
She died? If she had died I had been blessed,  
For then my grief, roused and allayed at once  
By memory of her love, had been a joy—  
A joy immensurate compared with pangs  
Which I do suffer now.—But I forget.  
I vowed to curse and laugh, and I do weep!  
It is in jest—think not these tears be real.  
This wise I think I humbly may confess  
My mother was a woman. I will shed  
My half which is not man, and then this source  
Of salted waters will be flinty rock  
Through sorrow-fending apathy made callous.  
This inborn weakness oozing from mine eyes  
Will shortly all be spent, and in my strength  
With hate intensest, bitterest, I will hate  
As I have loved!

SEXTUS.

Alas! I pity thee.

ANTONIUS.

Nay, do not pity me. I scorn the thought  
Of sympathy for such fool's sufferings.  
I would embrace a flame—I have it not,  
Nor proof that it was mine, save this fell smart.  
Make me not hate thee also for thy pity!

SEXTUS.

What was her name?

ANTONIUS.

Her name!—I tell it not!  
Never again shall that infernal word

Escape its prison-house within these lips !—  
And yet—and yet—I would it might escape—  
It cankereth my heart—I spit it out,  
And cherish it no more. 'Twas Livia.

## SEXTUS.

And thou—where didst thou go ?

## ANTONIUS.

To the far east  
Where I had never been, where no one knew me.  
And there, with a new name and an old heart,  
I tried to throw away a blasted life,  
Which clingeth to me as a gibing phantom.  
Seasons succeeded, armies went and came,  
But I remained, vicegerent of Destruction,  
Unknown save by my deeds and the new style  
I had chosen : aye companionless till thou  
With valor, gentleness, and sympathy  
All unexpressed didst win me from myself.  
Night groweth on to its full middle age  
And with its darkness turneth black my liver.  
If I were not ashamed and were alone  
This cursèd melancholy I would drown  
Like a blind puppy, in a flood of tears.  
I was a dolt to be bewitched by thee,  
And by my love for thee kept from the feast ;  
Else merriment had spread a rosy bed  
And I had held oblivion in mine arms.  
But now I go to sleep upon a thorn,  
And to my heart a stinging memory hug.  
Yet execrated memories of my woes,

Nor weariness of this day's march, nor yet  
 The allurements of this great and festive city  
 Can win from me the burning consciousness  
 I am on my way to Rome, nor me content  
 To tarry on the journey one short night.  
 I would I dared to tell thee what I hope  
 And fear to find in Rome ;—I dare not do it !  
 Good-night. I mock no more, and thou alone  
 Mayst hotly cherish that fool Fancy's dreams.  
 Yet, be they ever so warm they bring forth naught  
 But freezing disappointment. Now good-night.

*Exit Antonius.*

SEXTUS.

Good-night. Alas ! how great a ship was wrecked  
 And lost its freight on that most fickle sand ;  
 A freight more precious than the East affordeth,  
 Though Phoebus' treasury were emptied for it.  
 The winds of love, which seemed so prosperous  
 And followed yielding sails with pressing suit,  
 By their own favour driving swift the bark,  
 Compelled the shock and tore the canvas down.  
 The beaten vessel drifteth now a'main  
 Till haply under leaden skies it sink.

CHORUS, *in the banqueting room.*

Troll the bowl, wreath the bowl, drain the bowl, sing !  
 Bacchus shall cheer us while Herod is king !  
 Thyrus with emblems of Venus entwine,  
 Venus hath coloured with red lips the wine.  
 Troll the bowl, wreath the bowl, drain the bowl cheerily.  
 Long live King Herod ! long live and merrily.

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Troll the bowl, wreath the bowl, drain the bowl, sing !  
Venus shall cheer us while Herod is king !  
Tables like those on Olympus are graced,  
Bacchus and Venus have met and embraced.  
Troll the bowl, wreath the bowl, drain the bowl cheerily.  
Long live King Herod ! long live and merrily.

## SEXTUS.

The revel runneth mad as night advanceth.  
But to my Cyprus cometh my fair day.  
My love is in her chamber, and my heart  
Leapeth as it would enter with the vines.  
Her window openeth as the gates of morning ;  
Bedazzled night withdraweth, shadows hide  
Behind the trees and slyly peep at her.  
I know that Neptune passing by this way  
Would think her lips were stolen from his realm  
And try to take them ; seeing thus her teeth  
Would bear the casket to his treasury.  
And thirsting Jupiter would stoop to drink  
At her full eyes believing them rare founts  
Irradiant with treasured light of heaven.  
The Graces, since she doth their offices,  
With one another play. Fair Hebe once,  
When exercising Juno's gaudy birds,  
Beheld her and is evermore afraid  
Lest some god find and bring her to Olympus.  
But Venus is not jealous of my darling  
Because she is so pure. O vision rare !  
Within the embrasure now herself she seateth,  
Upon her dimpled hand her dimpled cheek—  
O cheek too happy having rest so fair,

Too happy hand to hold so fair a fruit !  
Five fondling fingers blush with eagerness  
And press more closely like a lover's lips.—  
She is alone, she sigheth. Imprisoned bird !  
Dear bird of Paradise ! take all a life  
Of wildest liberty for one sweet hour  
Of sweet imprisonment in that sweet cage  
With thee. Still lovest me ? I will try magic,  
Soft music's magic, and my wand shall be  
The old familiar song,—not yet. I must  
One moment more enjoy what is too rare,  
Too glorious itself for aught more real  
Than magic's witcheries. What if the strain  
Should break the spell and make the vision melt  
To thinnest air, fading away in night ?  
Ah ! faithless lover ! is this then thy faith ?

*Sings.*

Stooping from thy window, love,  
    Listen to my sighing  
While from heated wastes above  
    Zephyrs, slowly flying,  
Seek cool vales of earth and lie beneath the shadows  
    dying.  
Hear me from thy window, love.

Stooping from thy window, love,  
    Listen to my story.  
While the smiling spheres above  
    Veil thee with their glory,  
Ere Night's thickly clustering tresses shall grow thin and  
    hoary,  
Hear me from thy window, love.

Stooping from thy window, love,  
List the vows I am paying.  
While in milky-ways above  
Goddesses are straying,  
I to thee, my deity, I to thee am praying.  
Hear me from thy window, love.

Stooping from thy window, love,  
Maiden coyness scorning  
List ere dawn on heights above  
Lighting tints of morning,  
Call thy loving love away with its bale fire warning.  
Hear me from thy window, love.

*Enter Salome.*

#### SALOME.

Was that some cruel cheat of my wild brain  
Which would torment my heart with mockeries?  
Was it some echo from the revelry  
Coming to mock me with sweet semblances?  
Or did I hear again the signal song  
Which, like a beacon, used in happier days  
To guide me to safe anchorage of love?  
Or have my thoughts, by some mysterious power,  
Called up its buried image from the tombs  
Of silent memory and bid it walk  
Among the hated phantoms of the feast,  
Which, leering, haunt me still? Fearful I search  
While hope and doubt within my breast debate  
And anxiously may question of the cause  
Until unsympathizing verity

Shall drive me back with disappointment's whips,  
Or else, most happy, with encircling arms—

## SEXTUS.

Thy lover clasp thee—hush ! 'tis I, 'tis I——  
And steal a joy from heaven—nay, not a word !  
I will no breath of this sweet substance lose  
Since, for one blissful moment, all is mine.

## SALOME.

Nay—let me look at thee. Yea, it is thou !

## SEXTUS.

Dear ! it was I ; I think it is not now,  
For I so feel my life commix with thine  
That thus, when lost in thee, I no more am.

## SALOME.

Nay, still thou art, for thee I feel and hear,  
Ah me ! and love—I nothing ne'er could love,  
Thou therefore something art, that something dear  
The something I first loved, which something was  
Thyself.

## SEXTUS.

Sweet reasoner ! I am but half myself,  
Or something less, and yet I am something more ;  
For this compounded being, this new life  
Is so much greater than that former life  
That this of sweet existence doth devour  
In one swift moment more than that in years  
All made of days whose hours are centuries.  
Sweet love !

SALOME.

Nay—I will strive—yet could not do it  
Did I not know thy gentle strength would win.

SEXTUS.

Sweet life !

SALOME.

Ah me !

SEXTUS.

What ! sighs !

SALOME.

Thou dost not talk !

'Tis so much happiness to hear thy voice !  
Thy words to me confirmed assurance give  
That thou art here—say I am thine !

SEXTUS.

Mine ! mine !

I stand upon the pinnacle of bliss,  
The very summit of the mount of joy,  
O'ertopping heaven's high walls, and look within.  
I would not lose thy love to be a god  
And rule Olympus :—tell me thou art not changed.

SALOME.

I changed ? I did not hear aright. I changed ?  
Thou art my love. Can mists refuse to rise  
Toward the sun and wander where they list ?  
Can tides refuse to leap toward the moon ?  
When they shall change will my affections cease

Toward thyself to rise. Are true stars moved  
From their bright constancy by wooing winds ?  
Will they not shine so long as the sun shineth ?  
Thou art my sun ; if ever I lose thy light  
I shall be seen no more.

## SEXTUS.

Sweet heart ! sweet soul !

That kiss shall tell thee I never had a doubt ;  
And this shall tell thee that I never will ;  
And this upon thy dear, pale forehead placed,  
Thy forehead like the soft and crescent moon  
Reposing underneath the wings of night,  
Shall give thee dreams of my sure constancy ;  
And this upon thy softly falling lids,  
Whose fringing lashes as the shadows lie  
On wooded shore of a dark, moon-lit lake,  
Shall blind-fold thee to all my jealousies ;  
And these on either cheek sweetly attest  
That Friendship wandereth arm in arm with Love  
Through these sweet gardens, rose and lily beds ;  
And this,—and this,—and this,—upon thy lips  
Shall seal my life in thee, so that henceforth  
While I am with thee I am with my life,  
When separate thou hast my life, I die.——  
So silent, love ! Yea, rest thy pretty head,  
And hide those tender eyes, if so thou wilt,  
From jealous stars, upon my steadfast breast.  
Let not those envious archers shoot their rays  
At thy faith-beaming lights to put them out ;  
For they, like diamonds shining in the dark,  
But softer and fairer have put the stars to shame.

## SALOME.

Ah, Sextus ! cease !

## SEXTUS.

If overseeing comets,  
Those lantern-bearing stewards of the gods  
With silvery robes of office trailing wide,  
Who rove the star fields to observe their growth  
And crop the stale ones, while reclaiming planets  
Which wandering far astray might trample them ;—  
Should one of these espy thine opening orbs  
He straightway in his book would note two stars  
Freshly expanding dewy in shady nooks,  
And add them to his list.

## SALOME.

Deride them not.

## SEXTUS.

Now raise them once and give me one full look,  
That of it I may drink to drunkenness ; give  
I am a very epicure in love  
Without the abstinence which knoweth to deal  
In temperate measure. Make me drunk, my love,  
And speak one word to let me know thy thoughts  
Do not play truant ; speak one word, my life,  
Or I shall coax it from thy bashful lips.

## SALOME.

Nay, if in that love-language thou wilt talk,  
Give me a kiss, which shall inform my choice,

Resolving all its doubts. This night, even now,  
 I danced before the king at his command,  
 Whereat he swore a mighty oath to give me  
 Whatever I would ask.

SEXTUS.

A generous king.

SALOME.

What shall I ask? A dazzling coronet  
 To bind about these darkly flowing locks,  
 With burning sapphires clustering on my brow  
 As Pleiads hanging on the brow of night?  
 A grayish misty robe with brilliants decked  
 And silvery purple train like that of morn?  
 A veil of golden gauze such as infoldeth  
 Saturnia's rounded form, half hiding charms,  
 When through the violet curtains of her chamber  
 Abroad she cometh with her smiling maids,  
 That thus more pleasing I may seem to thee?

SEXTUS.

Dear heart, that were a giddy woman's choice,  
 Not thine, nor mine; for I so love thee best  
 Simply enrobed, as sorteth with thy grace,  
 Thy purity, woman's true majesty.

SALOME.

Ah! then I know what thou wouldest have me ask—  
 I will not ask it.

SEXTUS.

What is it, my fairy?

SALOME.

I know.

SEXTUS.

What? what?

SALOME.

The strongest, fleetest steeds  
That winds of Arab desert e'er begot,  
Swift as the coursing, emulating fires  
Which in ethereal amphitheatres  
On nights appointed hold Olympic games  
And prizes win before the assembled stars.

SEXTUS.

What wouldst thou do with them, sweet obstinacy?

SALOME.

Oh, we could flee away and leave pursuit  
To die o'erheated in bootless chase,  
While malice and detraction gnaw their cheeks  
In speechless impotence; injustice, pride,  
And stern ambition build their flinty walls,  
To separate us happy fugitives,  
Of tenfold thickness, ready against our coming;  
Yet for our coming, bent with captor's chains,  
From cloud-embattled watch-towers gaze in vain.

SEXTUS.

And whither should we go? Where rest secure?

SALOME.

Ah, we could find some flowery wilderness

In distant, unknown lands, some gentle vale  
Around whose borders in protecting curves  
Above each other hills and mountains rise  
With softened outlines, like aspiring dreams.  
And on their buttresses and domes sublime  
Sweet-scented forests spread their flowing robes  
Of varied green, which hang as creeping vines  
Upon the bastion crags and turret heights  
Of sunny, antiquated palaces.  
And on their sides brooks hanging, trembling glance,  
And waving cascades gleam adown mid-air  
As streamers which, long since, were shaken out  
To the mild breezes on a festival,  
From these same palaces, and left to float  
Till lost their colours day by day and paled  
To silvery whiteness, bleached and glittering.

## SEXTUS.

Dear tantalizer ! How should we dwell there ?

## SALOME.

Our palaces those mountains and their sides  
The pastures for our flocks, and in the vale  
Our tent, our home should be. Full flowering shrubs  
Should form its trellised sides, its archèd roof  
Starred with vine blossoms, covered all with vines,  
Must be protected by tall trees which stand  
Like thine own strong and bearded veterans,  
Or Cæsar's, fresh returned from Gallic wars,  
In armour green, spears waving in their hands ;  
Who never sleep, but guard us silently,  
Or only speak in whispers when they must.

There could we dwell so happy, nay, so far  
Above the ken of common happiness  
That it, for us, would be unhappiness.

## SEXTUS.

Ah ! sweet tormentor ! I did question thee  
To have the dear assurance of thy love  
In some new phrase. Thou art half persuaded now  
To follow me, yield to my selfishness,  
Trust to mine arm for thy security  
And for thy happiness to my true heart.  
But 'tis not for my selfishness alone ;  
I plead to thee as well for thine own meed.  
In soul no longer two, why parted stand,  
Nor go beyond this parting iron wall,  
Obdurate tyranny unreasoning ?

## SALOME.

I would, and yet would not ; urge me no more.  
When I cannot, with thee I would away,  
But when I can, I shrink and must say nay.  
When thou art far I fain would fly to thee,  
But when thou art here, ah ! then—why should I flee ?  
Have confidence in Love ; though he is not cunning  
Nor wise he hath a most persistent will,  
And he will find for us some remedy.

## SEXTUS.

Faith without action doth accomplish naught ;  
Faith guiding action doth accomplish all.  
Though I do love thee more for thy sweet faith,  
Trust not too much to all-assuming Love.

**SALOME.**

What ! dost thou slight Love ? ah ! that is permitted,  
For it is not Love whom I love, but thou.

**SEXTUS.**

I slight him not, lest, quitting, he delude me,  
Yet much distrust his skilfulness as guide  
By wisest ways to accomplishments the wisest.

**SALOME.**

Thou dost not follow him ? Alas ! I thought  
He guided thee to me.

**SEXTUS.**

And so he did,  
He is a sure guide to thee ; he followeth  
And findeth thee where'er thou hid'st thyself.  
But let him not have Reason's torch to bear ;  
He always quencheth it. I have followed him,  
Seeking asylum from malignant ills  
Which keep us from our perfect happiness.  
I sought with him a castle magical,  
Of which he ever talked, said it was his,  
Easy to reach if we would but set out,  
Founded on clouds and towering to the skies  
With white-browed battlements and dungeon keeps  
And silvery turrets high and glittering moats,  
Portcullis crimson, amber-coloured gates,  
Full manned with sleepless guardians golden clad—

**SALOME.**

All brave and true ?

## SEXTUS.

As Hector, true and brave,  
When enemies approach prepared to throw  
Over the fortress frowning armour black  
And meteors hurl against a hapless foe,  
Serpents of vivid flame which dart and wind  
And hiss, and in their writhing folds embrace  
And crush their victim with terrific roarings,  
Or dry his blood and lap away his breath  
With their hot forkèd tongues and fiery touch.  
Within the castle amber, mellow light  
Shed from the myriad precious stones which form  
The ceilings high, and of dividing walls  
Mosaic mirrors make, from which the beams  
Reflected glance and tremble with a sound  
Of softest music—

## SALOME.

Oh ! a paradise !

## SEXTUS.

Is it not, dear ? And couches made of down  
Whiter than plumage which the snow-cloud moulteh  
Swift flying through the air, and softer far  
Than wings of hoar-frost melting at the touch.  
Nymphs, silver-sandalled, crowned with aureate locks  
On ivory shoulders falling, clad in gauze  
Carnation tinted envying not the hue  
Which mellower, richer, may be seen beneath  
The generous covering, ready stand to bring  
Delights of every kind ; and happy sleep  
With gentle train of beauteous dreams awaiteth

To bring its balm refreshing to the sense  
Wearied with joys, with pleasures overtasked.—  
But why doth sudden sadness o'er thy face  
Come like a cloud at noon ? Nay, smile, my love.

## SALOME.

It were a heaven for me to dwell with thee  
In such a place, but ah ! I could not go  
Against my mother's will. Yet I have visions  
Of dearest bliss in fleeing far with thee,  
Far from this spot, where even breezes watch  
Us to betray, which I cannot conceal.  
They have themselves set forth in spite of me ;  
And I have blushed that they have been perceived,  
Though by thee only, and I am self-condemned  
For giving ear to disobedience,  
And bowed with shame at mine own forwardness.  
Visions so pleasing—are they innocent ?

## SEXTUS.

Ah ! spare thyself, poor child, this self-reproof.  
Thou art too tender, yet I love thee more  
For that same tenderness. Nay, think not on it ;  
As innocent as thou who art innocence.—  
We found it not, this castle magical.  
Trusting no more to ardent Love's device  
Whatever Reason biddeth we will do.

## SALOME.

If Reason point a refuge and a way,  
Which leadeth not through disobedience,  
We will pursue the joys which thou hast sought.

I go before the king there to demand  
A princedom for thyself where all thy powers,  
The lofty nobleness of thy great soul,  
The mighty scope of thy grand intellect,  
Thy tenderness and kindly purposes,  
Thy justice and compassionate intent,  
Thy chaste ambition with its aims sublime,  
Thy virtues brave and virtuous bravery,  
Thy pious veneration for the gods ;  
All great endowments which do make a man  
Pre-eminently great among his kind——

## SEXTUS.

My generous darling !

## SALOME.

Nay—nay—let me speak—  
Shall enter on a stage worthy of them  
And their great dignity ; where they shall move  
And act their parts so much beyond compare,  
And show themselves of such a noble stuff  
That all the gazing world must needs applaud  
And call them composition nobler far  
Than greatest Grecian poet ever sung ;  
Name thee more worthy than the illustrious throng  
Patrician which, so I too oft have heard,  
Doth worship toward my chamber, as the Jews  
Bow down and worship toward their holy mount.  
Then all shall venerate thee as they ought  
And deem thee godlike only less than I,  
And think me of all women happiest,  
Most fortunate, most envied, honoured, blessed.

I will a princedom ask for thee ; the king  
For his oath's sake shall not deny me aught.

## SEXTUS.

O best of all that best in woman is,  
Name for all best in our humanity,  
Thy reason creepeth not by weary steps  
But moveth light-like : ask what thou wilt, love,  
And be content for, be assured, 'tis best.

## SALOME.

Ah me !

## SEXTUS.

What is it ?

## SALOME.

How could I forget !

How I am rendered ingrate by my joy !  
Must selfishness mother in happiness ?

## SEXTUS.

Let it be called injustice toward thyself.  
Whence these false accusations ?

## SALOME.

There is now

Lying in ward, shut in a prison drear,  
A man, a prophet, or philosopher,  
Who loveth me as his child.

## SEXTUS.

Why is he there ?

## SALOME.

I do not know ; those things are not for me.  
Yet am I well persuaded for no wrong  
Which he hath done ; he is incapable  
Of aught but good, though wise as Socrates.  
He hath instructed me in many things,  
And I have tried to render less severe  
His duress, though he seemeth not to feel it,  
Nor scarce to know that he a prisoner is,  
So free is his great soul.

## SEXTUS.

What is his name ?

## SALOME.

John Baptist ; 'twas just now, this very eve,  
I left him promising that I would seek  
To set him free ; though little did I think  
So ready an occasion would be found.  
He told me that my search should find success.  
Now is the hour ; I will unto the king  
And there demand John Baptist's liberty.  
And for our fears and wishes, plans and hopes,  
We'll leave them with the gods, distrusting not  
That a good action be allowed to mar  
The apt accomplishment of our desires,  
Since our desires are just. Thou dost consent  
To cease the search for perfect happiness  
Almost secured, let fall maturing hopes,  
That we may loose the bonds of innocence  
And set the prisoner free by pious act,  
Thine act, of gentleness ?

## SEXTUS.

Do as thou hast said ;  
 Thy thoughts are god-inspired.

## SALOME.

Or wilt thou think  
 I love thee aught the less if thus I yield  
 This vantage-ground to move all counteractions  
 Which keep us separate and make us mourn ?

## SEXTUS.

O love ? O child ! O woman ! how to find  
 Names reverend of endearment worthy thee  
 I know not. I would call thee more than child,  
 Than woman more, if in the list of names  
 Of things in heaven, in earth, in upper air,  
 Or in the realms beneath a name there were  
 Which better named all that I venerate,  
 All that I love in beings less than gods,  
 Than that name woman. Princess of thy sex,  
 I know thou lovest me, know that thou art mine.  
 Do as thou say'st ; I follow thy pure thoughts,  
 The dictates of thine instinct generous,  
 As in the dark I find my way by stars.

CHORUS, *in the banqueting room.*

Wine ! wine ! beauty and wine !  
 Call back the vision of Iris divine  
 Passing on drops of a musical shower ;  
 Conjure it, king, with omnipotent power.  
 Royal wand richly with favours entwine,  
 Call back the vision of Iris divine.

Wine, wine, beauty and pleasure  
Herod, the godlike, doth give without measure.

Wine ! wine ! beauty and wine !  
Call back the vision of Venus divine  
Rising on waves of a musical ocean,  
Conjure it, king, for thy servants' devotion.  
Here to her temple, her altar, her shrine,  
Call back the vision of Venus divine.  
Wine, wine, beauty and pleasure  
Herod, the godlike, doth give without measure.

## SEXTUS.

Nay, shudder not, they shall not have my goddess ;  
Not even in vision shalt thou pass before them.

HERODIAS, *in the palace.*

Salome ! Speak ! Where art thou, child ? Salome !

## SALOME.

List ! 'Tis my mother's voice ! Nay, I must go !  
She seeketh me in my chamber. Steal away,  
But come again. We will together bear  
The welcome news of his deliverance  
To John the Baptist. Ah !—yet, I must go.  
But I will soon return to find thee here.

## SEXTUS.

Can I not keep thee ? Stay ! I fear to loose  
My hold on thee lest, disappearing, thou  
Never come more.

## SALOME.

Oh fie ! Hear'st thou ? She calleth.  
Farewell one moment ; I am there and here.

## SEXTUS.

Farewell, my love. I love to say farewell,  
When 'tis but for a moment and thus said.  
Farewell, farewell.

## SALOME.

Farewell. Thou wilt remain ?

## SEXTUS.

Yea, here. Farewell, my breath, my life, farewell.

*Exit Salome.*

The tide of night, fast rolling from the east,  
Is rising to the flood, and on its waves  
Stars glide as ships with glittering sails at sea ;  
While in yon valley, in that tide's dark depths,  
The sighing ghosts of lovers' broken vows  
Wander disconsolate, like ocean nymphs  
Bereft of lovers whispering still of love.  
I will go sigh with them—nay, I will stay.  
This boding silence aweth ; there is no noise,  
Save the carouse which waxeth ever louder  
And gratheth dismal croakings on my sense,  
Foretelling horrors. I would rather hear  
The direst thunders ever yet that roared  
Than this vile raven queen's presaging voice.  
I feel as had bad omens crossed my path

For evil, and I wait to learn some ill.  
Hist ! what be these strange mutterings in the air  
As all the demons of hot Tartarus  
Were plotting hell-plots near me ? I will draw  
And stand prepared ; even fiends shall fright me not.

### III.

#### THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER.

HERODIAS *and* SALOME.

HERODIAS.

SOON as fair Courtesy would let me quit  
The courtly company in the banquet room  
I sought thee. Well? Where hast thou been?

SALOME.

In the air.

Blinded and sickened by the glare of lights  
Which gloated on me, and the creeping gaze  
That fastened, stifling me, upon my heart;  
From the blood-heating dance, which caused life's deeps  
In tidal storms to break their thunderous waves  
Upon the shores resounding of mine ears  
I took refreshment proffered by the breeze  
In the cool garden walks.

HERODIAS.

Why tremblest thou?

Am I an ague, that thou so dost quake  
When I embrace thee?

## SALOME.

Nay ; it is the dance ;  
Or,—'tis a weariness—I know not what—  
Which bringeth terrors—but I know not whence—  
Formed formless from a void—I know not how ;  
Yet they do shake me.

## HERODIAS.

Thou hast naught to fear.  
So thou dost please me with compliance, child,  
I am thy bulwark. Few the dangers be  
Which dare encounter me in seeking thee.

## SALOME.

I would obey thee, yea I would do all  
That daughter, maiden may ; ask me no more ;  
I pray, so please thee, ask me not to dance,  
Let me not dance again !

## HERODIAS.

Thou shalt not dance.  
Poor fawn ! thou fleest the baying of applause.  
Why, thou hast worship had enough this night  
To place among the gods a rounded score  
Of women, yet thou weepest. Dry these springs  
If natural, or rather let them flow  
Till all be spent. No woman needeth tears  
Save those she maketh. Ingenuine, briny tears  
Should have been wasted, and their sources drained,  
And covered deep with that dry growing moss,  
Indifference, whilst thou wert still a babe.  
If thou wouldest see tears cause them to be shed.

These showers are timeless now like spring-tide rains  
 In autumn. This is thy true harvest-home.  
 Thy beauty buds have opened full of fruit,  
 And thou must gather it. Thy mother dieth  
 Of hunger ; let her pluck thy waving grain.  
 She fainteth thirsting ; from thy flowing press  
 Give her to drink and flood life's ebbing tides.  
 Unclad she quaketh perishing with cold ;  
 Let her find warmth beneath thy burdened vines.  
 She blancheth with impatience, and its fires  
 Burn hot distress ; pass thine untasted cup  
 From moist, unready lips to hers which scorch.  
 Give consolation from thy royal wealth.  
 My child ! my child ! give me King Herod's oath.  
 Let me appoint the tenor of thy claim  
 And I am fed, refreshed, clothed, and consoled.

## SALOME.

Nay, plead not thou to me : I plead to thee,  
 If I with filial courtesy may dare,  
 Nor, not obedient, disobedient seem ;  
 For I am straitened, know not how to turn,  
 Nor may deny, nor yet unperjured give.  
 There is a promise weighing on my soul,  
 Which I alone can lift with counterpoise  
 Of Herod's weighty oath.

## HERODIAS.

Thy mother prayeth ;  
 Weigh'st thou thy promise against thy mother's prayer ?  
 Come, let me frame thy quest, straightway thou make it  
 While wine yet firmly holdeth wreathèd vines

Upon the eyes of Reason, and before  
 The weather of the royal mood shall change  
 From fair to foul. Thy bow of beauty benth  
 In odour-bearing clouds from misty bowls  
 About King Herod's head, and while he drinketh  
 Deep generosity and is a god  
 Omnipotent to give or to refuse,  
 He will unquestioning grant thy request.

## SALOME.

This once, my mother, let me conquer thee  
 In pleading.

## HERODIAS.

Nay, drive not from thee my love  
 Withstanding me. It is a thing alone,  
 A mother's love, without successor ; dead,  
 Or fled, 'tis gone, and gone 'tis gone for aye.  
 There is not in the whole world of human loves  
 That which dare enter in to light the dark  
 And haunted void where lieth its sepulchre.  
 Such is my love ; although, perchance, I have seemed  
 Cold and unloving, leaving thee alone  
 In Nature's school to have thy qualities  
 Spring and increase of their uncultured strength.  
 Believe not I have loved thee less, nor think  
 I have not laboured constantly for thee.  
 What but my love caused thee to learn the art  
 Which in itself concentrates every art  
 By woman found ; which flasheth more than wit,  
 Enkindleth blood more than the burning eye  
 Half hid in heavy lids, as fire in smoke ;

Inviteth more than smiles, than sighs enthralleth ;  
 Enchaineth reason more than linkèd words,  
 And lifteth tossing hearts more than the waves  
 Of love-moved, undulating melodies ;  
 Which teacheth modesty to calculate,  
 And how conceal the least, the most display  
 Full ripened treasures of the Hesperides  
 Which she, in scarlet armour, gently guardeth ;  
 How hottest make imagination burn,  
 And from cold vacancy forge glowing charms ;  
 But, chiefly, teacheth timid modesty  
 How best to hide her blushing self from view ;  
 The art which now hath safely, quickly led  
 Thy beauty to a bloodless victory  
 Worthy an emperor and bloody fields,  
 The conquest of a king, a royal oath,  
 In worth a diadem, which thou wouldest lose  
 Through my supineness——

SALOME.

Mother !

HERODIAS.

Peace ! my child.

I do not blame thee for't ; thou dost not know  
 The attributes of him whom thou wouldest save.  
 Thou know'st not how to chain thy heart's impulse  
 With chilling links of speculation, forged  
 From reason cold ; nor yet hast learned the trick  
 To balance judgment on the silvery point  
 Of interest. Such wisdom cometh later ;  
 But thou mayst take it from me in thy youth.

'Tis a full hour to midnight : half of that  
I would commune with thee to inspirit time  
Which else will sluggishly forget to move.  
Come, let me teach thee life-craft.

## SALOME.

I would live  
Uncraftily with justice and my conscience.

## HERODIAS.

Talk not of what thou dost not understand.  
Pretext is justice, conscience prejudice.  
Thou art ignorant ; I have work for thee to do  
And must instruct thee ; it is now high time,  
For with thine opening buds thou shouldst begin  
To exhale the power of woman, feel the joys  
Of power.

## SALOME.

The power to love and be beloved  
Is all I ask.

## HERODIAS.

The power to curse thyself  
By yielding every power but this and this  
Is weakness. Thou art strong when thou art loved,  
For then thou rulest ; weak when thou dost love,  
For then thou art ruled. Lead for thy purposes  
The passions and the appetites, the loves  
And hates, the weaknesses and strengths which move  
And master men ; but love them not. Their love,  
Make it an engine built against themselves,

And batter them ; the missiles which they send  
Burn not on thine own hearth for warmth, but cast  
them

Envenomed back. What's sense of love compared  
With sense of sway, the tyranny of will ?  
Then conquer, conquer all that charms may win,  
A conquest not to be enjoyed but used,  
And doubly thus enjoyed in double use.

## SALOME.

Naught would I wish to win, all would I give  
From him who loveth me and to him I love.  
I know no use of love save to be shrined.

## HERODIAS.

Lift 'now thy spirit to a hate sublime  
And feel the subtlest essence of all joys.

## SALOME.

I cannot feel a greater joy than feel  
That whom I love doth love me perfectly.

## HERODIAS.

What are to thee the joys of womanhood  
As felt by common women ? Thou shouldst be  
So mighty in thy strength of intellect,  
So cunning of intent, so stern of will,  
That thou mayst handle beauty and thy wits  
As if they were another's : let them be  
The mercenary hosts of force supreme,  
The might of woman's soul cut from the clogs  
Of her soft nature, weaknesses of sex,

Shame, tenderness, and pity pitiful,  
Susceptibility to love and mourn,  
By trenchant steel of her self-tempered will.

## SALOME.

Mourning affection convalescent is,  
Love grief's forerunner : I would love and mourn.

## HERODIAS.

Nay, hear me. Coax to loving strength-proud men  
And, to make sure success, draw them apart  
And deal with them alone ; for they are safe  
Surrounded by thy sex, as is the sun  
Surrounded by the stars whose mutual bonds  
Hold him in place and from the power of each.  
And when the fools are to an ambush drawn  
Drive barbèd torments through their writhing hearts,  
Sharp, racking pains and marrow-burning fires,  
And tear by pieces Reason from his throne.

## SALOME.

So might a fiend do, but a woman never.

## HERODIAS.

Tempt, tempt, yea tempt always, for men aye love  
Temptation more than that which tempteth them.  
Let nothing tempt thee save desire to tempt.  
And be thou then temptation varièd  
In fashion ever new ; yet screen thyself  
With soft repulses like a coan robe.  
Yet so thou be temptation thou must be  
Never fruition ; therefore thou must be

---

A Proteus in thy skill to escape and change  
Thy seeming, with a syren's voice and lures.  
Be sparkling wine up mounting on the brim,  
Receding ever from the eager lips.  
Be full ripe fruit outbursting to the taste  
And trembling on its stem, yet never fall,  
Still bending more and more with luscious weight  
Yet never bending to the hungry grasp,  
More and more tangible, yet never touched.

## SALOME.

The gods permit no monster such as this.

## HERODIAS.

Let hope be sharpened by uncertainties,  
Possession by anticipation held.  
Fetter thy breath and make it come and go  
With limping, laboured gait and bear thy blood  
To feed responsive fires in either cheek.  
Seem to be all things but that which thou art,  
And seem to seem not, all unconscious seem.  
Ruling herself a woman may rule all  
If she of seeming know the perfect use.  
She maketh wisest fools, the strongest slaves,  
And from the tallest heads lifteth their crowns.  
She writeth legislator's laws ; unseen  
Upon the judgment-seat maketh decrees,  
Dealeth death punishments to the accused unheard,  
And sharpeneth dull executioners.

## SALOME.

I fear I understand thee, yet do not.

## HERODIAS.

Thou shalt remember passion is the fire  
Promethean which giveth life to love.  
And thou shalt light this fire with flashes stolen  
From heaven.

## SALOME.

And shackled have my vitals torn  
Without remission as a punishment,  
Or be consumed by what I would control  
Not knowing how to seize and master it.

## HERODIAS.

Well, then, remember love is the treasure-house  
Of kings, passion the fire which breaketh in.  
Thence kindle it ; but see that thou dost do it  
Like an incendiary in the dark  
With torch of glowing posture slyly put,  
Its glare half hid by false unconsciousness,  
Or hooded flame of burning, down-cast looks ;  
Or let the spark thrown off from rising lids  
Be borne to ready tinder by a sigh ;  
And let the breast in crescent brilliance gleam  
Forth of its cloudy screen from time to time  
As 'twere by accident ; and when the flames  
Possess the treasury, its owner crazed  
In wild confusion turning impotent,  
Then shalt thou draw his royal treasures out,  
His oaths, his gifts, his powers of life and death,  
But, best of all, the power of safe revenge.

SALOME.

Revenge is never safe ; I would it flee  
As the dread Hydra.

HERODIAS.

What ! Thou knowest it ?

SALOME.

I have heard it pictured. In the wastes of hell  
Where from their ashen sources ooze the floods  
Which stretch their waveless, slime-envenomed length  
Through direful regions of the nether world,  
With crawling horrors to their surface filled  
Which glare with eyes that wink not, fixed and fell ;  
Where dreadful forests cast terrific shade  
And move and mutter as the shrouded dead  
When they walk forth ; where clammy vapours brood,  
Hatching distempers, while through their dim shapes  
Serpents with flaming eyes, slow moving, trail  
Dull lightnings, gloating terrors formless writhe,  
And lost winds standing voiceless gasp for breath,  
There is a cave, mid black, blood-dripping cliffs  
And overhanging crags and shelving ledge,  
Of tenfold darkness, where no light of day  
Can penetrate. There, on the bitter flood,  
A horrid monster dwelleth aspic-formed.  
At each extremity a hideous head  
Hot hisses uttereth with fiery breath  
Which lighteth momently the fetid lair ;  
And on each creeping scale a poisonous spine  
Aye moveth and emitteth burning juice.

While seeking prey it batteneth on itself,  
Swelleth and festereth ; feeding on its prey  
Groweth a lean, self-stinging skeleton,  
Then gnaweth madly and fatteneth on itself.  
This monster is Revenge ; it biteth both ways  
And stingeth with each spine. So I have been told.

## HERODIAS.

It is a doting nurse's marvellous tale  
To frighten children. Thou, my child, shouldst be  
No child of common stuff. Thou shalt have wrongs.  
Woman, with all her power, shall suffer wrongs ;  
Betrayal, scorn, neglect, indifference,  
The mockery of those whom she would mock,  
Greater deceit of those she would deceive.  
For there be some whom Mercury himself  
Teacheth to steal the semblances of fools  
To fool us with ; Hyperion's eloquence  
And Orpheus' lyre, to lure us from our wiles,  
While, in Achilles' armour, they are safe.  
And when they have pilfered all our precious things  
They leave our laps with woven net and bars,  
Like Hebrew Sampson, on unconscious locks.

## SALOME.

I would not mock, nor yet would I deceive.  
I would no wiles have, weave no web for flies ;  
Let that which winneth hold fast all my gain.  
I would give all, would shear no manly locks,  
But be Minerva's shield to him I love,  
And shelter him with truth, guarding his breast  
Forever faithful in my faithful arms.

## HERODIAS.

Thine inexperience is spiritless  
 And fermentation lacketh, like new wine.  
 The action of the world will ripen it  
 Till 't shall intoxicate thee, as strong drink.  
 All women do deceive ; all are deceived ;  
 And thou, betraying, yet shall be betrayed.  
 The duper duped can never more forgive :  
 Then let there be for thee in the whole reach  
 Of nature but one hunger, but one thirst,  
 One rest, one thought, one hope, one joy, revenge ;  
 One weariness, one sorrow, one distress,  
 One agony, the absence of revenge.  
 Thou has not savoured yet the thrilling sweets  
 Which lie like honey in the scarlet cup  
 Of full-blown rancor ; yet it is a taste  
 Which raiseth thee to gods, and thou becomest  
 Partaker of their joys, since their chief joy  
 Is vengeance.

## SALOME.

'Tis a fearful thing ; the gods,  
 Omniscient, never err. What seemeth to us,  
 Seeing but feebly part of the whole act,  
 As vengeance may be purest justice. I  
 Would rather leave all vengeance with the Furies,  
 Nor wish to mount to that too dangerous height.

## HERODIAS.

What ! Art thou without soul ? What ! Art thou base ?  
 What ! Hath my blood to slavish water turned,  
 To creep in sluggish currents through thy veins ?

I thought thee formed of metal different  
 And tempered with a temper different.  
 I thought thy mounting pride was such, when struck,  
 Instead of sparks, like pride of common souls,  
 'Twould give forth flames far-reaching to devour.  
 'Tis thy young nature which hath not its strength.  
 Come, let me heighten it with this hot kiss  
 And breathe strong fervour into thy fireless heart.  
 My knowledge shall transform thee as the taste  
 Of fruit forbidden on the mythic tree  
 And make thee wiser ; yea, this night shalt thou  
 Become a woman. Bend, and let me bind  
 A woman's stinging wisdom cropped from griefs  
 Upon thy brow, and with this close embrace  
 Burn all emotion from thy girlish breast  
 Save only one, the joy of hate, revenge.

## SALOME.

Wherefore should I seek vengeance ? Whom avenge ?  
 No one hath wronged me ;—'tis a fearful word,  
 Revenge ! I love it not ; pray talk not of it !

## HERODIAS.

We love the name of whatsoe'er we love,  
 We love to talk of whatsoe'er we love,  
 We love to lose ourselves in what we love :  
 So do I love that sweetest name revenge,  
 So love to talk of that sweet thing revenge,  
 So love to lose myself in sweet revenge.  
 Thy mother's wrongs, are they not then thine own ?  
 Come nearer me ; come here beneath this light,  
 That I may see thee blanch and sink away

In a simoom of pestilential words  
Called up from silent wastes of womanhood.  
Then shall a vengeance be aroused in thee  
Will not discriminate nor satiate be.

## SALOME.

Alas !

## HERODIAS.

Call me not from these ruins drear,  
The palaces and gardens of my youth,  
With thy soft voice. Here pleasures dead abide  
In ghostly silence ; memories here croak  
Forebodings sinister. Speak not but hear.  
I loved thy sire while I was still a child,  
Ere yet a sixteenth time the circling orb  
In annual voyage had borne me in its arms  
Up to the summer solstice, where the sun  
Stoppeth in middle course to embrace and bless  
His planets coming home from wandering.  
Thy father was Apollo in his prime,  
As glorious in beauty as the star  
Which leadeth ruddy Aurora up the steeps  
And ordereth the procession of the morn.  
Of noblest race was he, a very prince,  
Whose noble soul was nobler than his race.  
A prince in strength, a prince in bravery,  
In honour, tenderness, and love a king.  
There is no manly virtue was not his,  
No manly gentleness that was not his.  
I know not if I loved him, for I doubt  
If love be so inconstant ; but there was

A fever in my blood more fierce than love.  
In its delirium I saw but him,  
In all the noisy world I heard but him,  
In dreams and thought I thought and dreamed of him.

## SALOME.

Ah, thou didst love him, love him truly, mother.

## HERODIAS.

And had he never torn himself from me  
He still would be my thought, my dream, my life,  
And they all pure and noble as that self.  
But I forget, and thus forgetting loose  
My hold convulsive on forgetfulness.—  
A twelvemonth we were wedded ; thou wert born.  
Before thy little lips could speak his name  
He led his loving veterans to the wars.  
His couriers, slain, brought me no messages,  
And absence cooled my fever. Ere a year  
Seductive Herod, with his Orphean tongue,  
Had drawn my restless thoughts and heart to him,  
A kingly villain in a god-like form.  
I took him to the holiest recess  
Of my young life and gave its secrets up,  
And to that self did give mine honour up,  
The honour of my lord, to prove my love,  
And, in my madness, thought that in his care  
'Twas fourfold honour. So he guarded it  
As might a thief the treasures of a realm.  
He paid my trust with bitter treachery ;  
He paid my warmest love with coldest scorn ;  
And for mine honour gave me infamy.

And when he had sacked my goodly character,  
And pillaged from its temple's treasury  
My woman's jewels, which he flung away,  
He mocked me, girl, he mocked me, dost thou hear ?  
He mocked me, mocked me to my face, dost hear ?  
And cast me from him burdened with a gage  
Of love, dishonour, treachery and shame.

## SALOME.

Nay, mother, spare me. All thy flashing words  
Rush down as thunderbolts upon my soul  
And blast me. Spare thy child !

## HERODIAS.

Nay, thou must hear.

Thy father left the army on its march,  
Unlooked for, unattended, stood in Rome.  
Else had he never seen the accursèd proof  
Of more accursèd guilt, prince Herod's child  
And mine. He saw and learned the damning fact,  
But saw not me ; then fled Alcmaeon-like.  
Men said the furies seemed to follow him  
And that he sought and bravely found through death  
A refuge from them in oblivion.  
I never saw him more ; perchance he died,  
For he had loved me better than his life,  
Better than all save honour ; yet I have heard  
Through soldiers wandering from far distant fields  
Of deeds wrought by one hand, always the same,  
Which could be his alone.

## SALOME.

My father liveth !

He liveth ! Doth he live ?

## HERODIAS.

I was the scorn  
Of Roman matrons and of Roman men,  
And such king Herod made me, dost thou hear ?  
I, in a moment's frenzy, seized that child,  
As if it were the cause of all my woe,  
And strangled it.

## SALOME.

O horror ! O ! alas !  
Most speechless horror !

## HERODIAS.

Then I had it said  
That I had overlaid it in my sleep ;  
And Herod, this king Herod was the cause.  
At length I roused me, as a lioness  
Riseth to avenge her wounds and slaughtered whelps.  
Yet stealthily I wrought, nor wrought in vain.  
King Herod's brother Philip, through my craft,  
By engine and embankment of my siege,  
Was overcome and ceded to my power.  
And thus this goodly castle I obtained  
That from its vantage ground I might assail  
King Herod's self. But boots it not to tell  
By what enchantment, while yet Philip's wife,  
I brought king Herod grovelling to my feet.

And there I kept him chained ; for I had vowed  
By all the infernal and supernal gods  
To be avenged as never a woman was.  
Therefore I bound him by a fearful oath  
To be my husband ; Philip in the way,  
So much the worse for Philip ; he was moved,  
That as king Herod's wife without recess  
I might occasion watch for my revenge  
And seize it ere it slipped. Nor need was there  
Of oaths, for to the core I had him fired  
With passion, and I held him in the heat  
Till I should be his wife. Thus Philip's fate,  
Not wrought by me alone—nay, start not, nay,  
I told thee thou shouldst know thy mother's soul  
And pale and wither in the baleful light  
Of that fell knowledge—I would strangle thee  
If thou shouldst stand betwixt me and revenge.

## SALOME.

Let me go hence.

## HERODIAS.

Remain and listen—peace !

But when the king would take me for his wife  
John Baptist, whom alone he greatly feareth,  
Forbade him, and he wavered ; then I vowed  
That I would silence John the Baptist ; yea,  
If he had been a god I would have done it.  
Calmly I held the king within my grasp,  
Nor eased his fever till I was his queen,  
And this bold John the Baptist put in ward.  
I hasted not to my revenge lest haste

Should overrun itself ; but thread by thread  
 I have woven imperceptible my web.  
 Now the last thread is drawn ; let them escape  
 Who can. And thou—this night king Herod's eyes  
 Were windows for his passions to look through,  
 And they, too eager, they betrayed themselves.

## SALOME.

Oh ! let me go !

## HERODIAS.

I swear that thou shalt stay.  
 Thou hast withdrawn his wanton thoughts from me.  
 I tell thee he is mine, and he shall be,  
 To torture with infernal jealousies,  
 Than which the eumenides or gods of hell  
 Can find no sharper torment ; he is mine  
 Till I deliver him to furies. She  
 Who weakeneth admiration in his heart,  
 And looseneth thus my vengeful hold on him,  
 Cannot escape my wrath and punishment.  
 I'll make him hate thee, scorn thee and detest,  
 I'll make thee feel the royning of remorse,  
 I'll plant regrets prolific in thy heart,  
 Poison thy springs of life ; and on the king  
 Will bring the vengeance of the eternal gods.  
 For he shall break his oath and perjured lie  
 Or, me avenging, take John Baptist's life ;  
 Who, though he seem a man, full well I know  
 Is from the gods, subject to human power,  
 Subject to woes and mortal sufferings,  
 To the agony of death, and he shall feel it.

If e'er there was aught tenderer in his heart  
For me than scorn 'twas pity. Yet I loved,  
I loved him to a frenzy, and I sought  
To win his love. His youthful majesty,  
His god-like form, his towering loftiness,  
His soul that naught could reach, no power could bend,—  
Not all my charms could fire his quiet look,  
Not such seductions as have maddened Jove.  
The more he scorned and chastened me with words  
The more I loved, the more I bent and prayed.  
And when I saw that pray'rs could naught avail,  
Nor wealth of beauty bribe, nor tears could melt,  
That I could not possess him, then I swore  
None other should ; I hated him.

## SALOME.

Alas !

## HERODIAS.

And now I will avenge me as a god  
With one sweet blow, and that shall fall on thee,  
On John the Baptist, and upon the king.  
Yea, also on myself. Yet 'tis a pain  
So sublimate in its infernal kind  
To curse thee utterly, mine only child,  
That it is sister to the joys of heaven.  
Thus I through thee, will be fourfold avenged.  
The hour is come.

## SALOME.

There is a holy nymph,  
Daughter of Love and Pity, dwelling high

In heaven fast by the throne and judgment-seat  
Keeping the book of Justice, who is blind.  
The majesty of God envelopeth her,  
And from her face beameth benignity.  
Of all the forms in heaven hers, the most fair,  
Is most approved by all the heavenly host,  
Whence Punishment, Revenge, and Hate were chased  
With all their howling train to Tartarus.  
Her angels watch from the high battlements  
To find occasion for her offices.  
Her messengers fly home with sighs and tears,  
Gathered from penitential groves and keeps,  
And prayers which tremble under weights of woe.  
Amid the perfume-bearing trees that bloom  
Behind the throne, a screen from rays too bright,  
She garnereth them in her strong treasure-house,  
A grotto built of pearl and emerald,  
Of amethyst and sapphire, chrysolite,  
Chalcedony, sardonyx, topaz, beryl,  
And chrysoprasus, jacinth, sardius ;  
The source whence flow rivers of life, and come  
The balmy breezes of eternal health :  
Her name Forgiveness is.

HERODIAS.

Who taught thee this?

SALOME.

John Baptist.

HERODIAS.

Ha ! I see rebellion rise !

The gods do so to me and more also

If I forgive ! Thou shalt obey me. Up !  
 And in the royal presence make this prayer—  
 Yet stay !—Yea, written ; it were better so.  
 I will not trust thee now to seek the king.  
 Alarm might turn thee from thy charted course  
 Or, wilful, thou mightst mar my perfect plan.  
 Thy timid words might die of terror ere  
 They reached the king. I will contrive a way  
 To make thy tabled suit acceptable  
 As if thou offeredst it on bended knee.  
 Take now these tablets, write as I shall say :  
 “To thee, great king, king Herod, peace and health.  
 If it so please thy gracious majesty  
 With royal condescension to discharge  
 Thy royal oath, hear now thy handmaid’s prayer :  
 Presently after midnight let me have,  
 Upon a charger, John the Baptist’s head.”

SALOME.

Nay !

HERODIAS.

Ha ! what aileth thee ? Hath that Gorgon name  
 Turned thee to petrifaction ? Do I bear  
 Medusa’s head, that thus thy stony gaze  
 Without intelligence is fixed on me ?

SALOME.

Say thou art not my mother and content  
 I will be motherless.

HERODIAS.

Nay, sit thee down !  
 What ! shrink’st thou from me ? Wherefore ? Sit thee  
 down

And listen. Thou art but a child ; 'tis fit  
Thine inexperience should start aside  
At a strange sound, like colts untrained for war.

*SALOME.*

Nay, thou hast made me woman ; no more child  
I still as child am ready to obey  
Thy just commands in all things. But in this—  
To imbrue my hands in blood of a good man,  
To black my soul with vile ingratitude,  
To curse myself with sacrilegious crime,  
Never ! I swear it——

*HERODIAS.*

Perjure not thyself,  
Since it is useless. Listen yet a while  
Before thou swearest. Thou lovest Sextus still.  
When now I sought thee camest thou to me  
From his embrace ;—ay, blush, and thou wert fain  
By Herod's oath this night to franchise thee  
From my displeasure and my hinderance.  
Thou still canst do it. Write as I have said  
And thou mayst wed with Sextus ; none shall dare  
To let thee.

*SALOME.*

I will not strike hands with shame  
To purchase for myself a life of joy.  
Thou know'st well how to tempt, knowing the worth  
Of such a love as Sextus'. O relent !  
I am thy daughter.

## HERODIAS.

So was she who died  
 By these most beauteous hands—these tender hands—  
 Which still are strong enough to strangle thee.  
 And they shall do it, or thou shalt obey.  
 Quick ! Make thy choice and write.

## SALOME.

Nay ! I can die.  
 Death is the friend of those who are in pain,  
 And by the tortured ever standeth near  
 To take them from the rack.

## HERODIAS.

Ha ! think'st thou so ?  
 I'll undeceive thee ; for I'll make death stand  
 With sightless caverns and infernal grin  
 And skinny fingers clasped upon thy throat  
 To threaten and to torture thee himself  
 Without salvation.

## SALOME.

Him I fear not.

## HERODIAS.

Gods !  
 But thou art woman ; I will touch the quick.  
 Thy lover in the garden waiteth thee.  
 Before, behind, beside him ambushed lie  
 Men who are ordered, at a given sign,  
 When from the window I shall show this light,  
 To fall upon him, strike him to the heart.

Aha ! thou waverest now and turnest pale.  
What ! those bold roses flee thy cheeks at length ?  
And red rebellion hangeth flags of truce  
On thy defiant lips ?

SALOME.

Spare him ! Alas !

HERODIAS.

Finish the writing, sign, and he is safe.  
Refuse and, by the immortal gods I swear,  
He dieth.

SALOME.

Alas !

HERODIAS.

Ay, weep. Ay, wring thy hands.  
When tears thou wring'st from them I will relent.

SALOME.

I cannot see him die.

HERODIAS.

Haste, haste and write.

This lamp, shown to the angry rising wind  
From that near window, will not out so quick  
As shall his flickering life.

SALOME.

Have pity.

HERODIAS.

Write.

SALOME.

I ask not mercy for myself but him.  
Let him escape, I—

HERODIAS.

Write.

SALOME.

O take my life,  
Let it appease thy vengeance.

HERODIAS.

Write.

SALOME.

Alas !

HERODIAS.

Three steps will bring me to the window. Write,  
Or in one moment it will be too late.

SALOME.

Will naught avail me?

HERODIAS.

Write.

SALOME.

The gods forgive.  
I know not what to do, nor what I do.

HERODIAS.

Nay, write it plainly.

SALOME.

Ah !

HERODIAS.

What aileth thee ?

SALOME.

Ah !

HERODIAS.

What seest thou ? Turn thy glassy eye—speak ; speak !

SALOME.

As I inscribed his name a cold bright flame  
Followed my hand !

HERODIAS.

Thou art mad ! Finish and seal.

SALOME.

My arm refuseth its accustomed work.  
My hand cannot put seal and signature ;  
There is no sense in it—I cannot see.

HERODIAS.

Then will I guide it, sign and seal for thee.  
Ay, sink unconscious ; thou canst bend at length.  
I will so leave thee while I use thy strength.

## IV.

### A MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING JERUSALEM. ANTONIUS. AN AGED JEW.

#### ANTONIUS.

No constancy save of inconstancy  
And the persistent, damnèd, strenuous sprite  
The in-haunting mocker, mocking memory.  
Why, slumber even, which used to drudge all night  
Fitting new soles to the worn sandal life,  
Hath now become unstable in her moods  
As ever a woman, widow, wife, or maid,  
And will naught do for me but by caprice ;  
And then she taketh stitches two or three  
To keep together soul and body, patch  
Worn expectation, strengthen misery,  
As smiling women deftly darn and knot  
Hopes which are breaking, so that they may pull  
Them more entirely from the tortured heart.  
The solemn hour is nigh when eve and morn,  
Progenitors of night, shall separate.—  
Old man, what dost thou here? Eh? Fearest thou not  
The imminent storm? Full-armed clouds toss and pitch  
As ghostly triremes on an ebon sea ;

The struggling winds like drowning navies cry.  
The elements of nature enfevered are,  
In most delirious and ill-omened state.

## AGED JEW.

Languish thy children in chains, thou at ease in the arms  
of the spoiler !  
Strangers have gone to thy bed, and the heathen from far  
have defiled thee ;  
Daughters have witnessed thy shame, and thy sons, they  
cannot avenge thee.  
Rend thy fair garment and wail, yea, howl for the shame  
that is on thee.  
Where be thy men trained for war ? Where, where be  
thy chariots and horses ?  
Where be thy reverend feasts and the chanting tribes  
that come to them ?  
Where be thy prophets who ruled, and thy psalmists  
expert in sweet music ?  
Where be thy princes enthroned, anointed and crowned  
by thy prophets ?  
Herbage far rolling like seas growtheth red in the blood of  
thine armies,  
Under incarnadine waves lie vanquished their mouldering  
corpses.  
Neigh of thy horses is heard as they look from the land  
of the stranger,  
Longing with pain for their vales and the hands that once  
fed and caressed them.  
Groans of thy chariots sound ; they are dragging unwilling  
against thee

Driven by hands that are dyed in the blood of thy  
children to crush thee.

Spread are thy reverend feasts, but eaten are they by thy  
foemen.

Chanting tribes gather no more, but conquering bands of  
the gentiles.

Prophets instruct thee no more, but threatening signs in  
the heavens ;

Prophets shall rule thee no more, but the sons of unhal-  
lowed oppressors.

Psalmists with weeping are mute, and their hearts with  
their harps have been broken ;

Mistily seated on clouds they shed mournful tears on thy  
temple.

Fettered thy princes and sore with the servitude heavy  
upon them ;

Sighs and complainings are heard from them like the  
moaning of waters.

Slain is the bright morning Star, yea, dark-wandering  
planets have pierced him ;

Blood from his lacerate heart poureth torrents of wrath  
on thy dwellings.

Lift up thy voice for the woes, the captivity coming  
upon thee ;

Weep and bewail for the days when the captive shall  
seem to thee blessed.

#### ANTONIUS.

Thou answerest not. These portents, these strange  
sounds

Which are like voices speaking in the air,  
Dost thou not heed them ?

## AGED JEW.

I remark them well.

If thou dost fear them go, leave me in peace.  
I would unravel their mysterious sense.  
I came at even-tide, as is my wont,  
To meditate, and mourn our glories dead.  
That glorious city is their monument ;  
And, if I read aright these boding signs,  
It soon shall be their silent sepulchre.  
Mark well her bulwarks, note her gilded towers—  
City of beauty, joy of the whole earth,  
How hath thy song to sound of weeping turned !  
How desolate ! Put up thy hands and weep,  
Yea, wail and mourn, thou Rachel comfortless !

## A VOICE.

Woe ! woe !  
There be two woes ;  
Now cometh the first woe !  
The dragon tendeth to the earth !  
His wings o'ershadow it, he ruleth the hour !  
A time and time and half a time the second woe,  
The woe of woes, the woe devouring every woe shall come.  
Woe ! woe !

## PRINCE OF THE POWERS OF THE AIR.

Arouse the thunders, bid them mount their car  
And drive till farthest earth's foundations jar.  
Uncage tornados, let them raven forth ;  
Unfetter winds from West, South, East and North ;  
Loose from their icy prisons freezing storms ;  
Let midnight terrors take their cloudy forms ;

Let airy archers shoot their meteor flight ;  
 Let flames tartarean blaze in northern night ;  
 Let lightnings suit their serpent shapes on high ;  
 Let blackest horror cover earth and sky ;  
 Let each with each contend, and all with all ;  
 Let Chaos reign and Anarchy appall.

## ANTONIUS.

The gods preserve us ! What might be that voice ?—  
 The elements are cursed with lunacy !

## A VOICE FROM THE FAR HEIGHTS.

Hither come up ; enter thy rich reward.

## AGED JEW.

See ! from the donjon keep to heaven ascend  
 Horses and chariot of flaming fire !

## PRINCE OF THE POWERS OF THE DEPTHS.

Let central seas mount up and lash the pole ;  
 Let polar oceans on each other roll ;  
 Let fiery surges to the surface rise,  
 Upheave the land and scorch the shuddering skies ;  
 Let streams infernal rive the solid rocks  
 And stagger serried mountains with their shocks,  
 Rush overwhelming torrents through the wound,  
 Consume the fleeing air and pall the ground ;  
 Let tenfold darkness leaving realms of night  
 Devour the firmamental orbs of light ;  
 Let all commix, confound, contend with all ;  
 Let Chaos reign and Anarchy appall.

## A VOICE.

Blood ! blood !  
A sound of storms ! A sound of coming vengeance !  
Sounds of wrath !  
The clouds are crimson ! Mists arise all red with blood !  
The heavy clusters ripe are dropping blood !  
The groaning press is sweating blood !  
The grapes of wrath are pressed !  
The press o'erfloweth !  
Blood ! blood !

## AGED JEW.

O Lord, defend us in the day of trouble ;  
O Lord, have pity in the day of wrath !  
Terrors take hold on us ; who can withstand,  
Who, who can stand against Thine awful might ?  
In mercy save the remnant which remaineth ;  
Destroy not utterly. Shall Shiloh come  
In vain ? Shall the Messiah appear and find  
No welcome ? None to bend the knee ? No throne ?  
Remember all thy promises, O Lord.  
Save, save thy chosen, turn their hearts, O Lord,  
For David's and thy servant Samuel's sake,  
For Moses' sake, whom thou didst ever regard.

## ANTONIUS.

The shaking earth forbiddeth me to stand,  
Darkness to see, thunders and winds to hear !  
Speak ! Say thou livest !

## AGED JEW.

I am living still.

Lord God hath uttered His voice and the earth hath  
heard it affrighted.  
Tempests are fleeing away to escape from His terrible  
presence ;  
Mountains are melting to fire, and valleys to fiery rivers,  
Stars leaping headlong from heaven to hide in the  
shadows of chaos.  
Fearful in majesty and justice the Almighty Lord God  
of Sabaoth.  
Flasheth the spear in His hand through His awful  
pavilion of darkness.  
Arrows like falling suns gleam from the canopy darkly  
about Him.  
Lightnings descend from His brows, and wide-spreading  
flames are His sandals.  
Rivers are dried by His tread and oceans rolled back to  
their caverns.  
Thunders the noise of His footsteps o'erstriding 'twixt  
worlds the abysses ;  
Falling His feet on the orbs they quake with the might  
of His going.  
Sound of the seas is His voice and the roaring of  
numberless waters.  
Source of the light is His front, and His frown covereth  
nations with darkness.  
Judgment hath made its decree ; all the people are  
weighed in the balance.  
Mercy hath stoppèd her ears, and can now no more be  
entreated.  
Vengeance hath lifted the sword, it goeth not bright to  
the scabbard.  
Cedars of Lebanon come and bow themselves down for  
embankments.

---

Trenches about the city ! Ah ! trenches with blood overflowing !  
Braying of trumpets and cymbals, of war the terrible engines !  
Neighing of steeds and a shouting ! noises of captains and horsemen !  
Groanings of trodden on dying ! wailings of children and warriors !  
Outcries of pestilence ravening ! yarring of famine devouring !  
Voices of prayers unavailing ! cries as of women in travail !  
Voices of mothers bewailing, blessing the wombs that are barren !  
Flames ! flames ! flames in the Temple ! Defiled is the Holy of Holies !  
Voices of Silence and Death dominating the desolate city !

## ANTONIUS.

In such a tumult would I were a god !  
Fall down, ye heavens, yea, tumble, roar and crash ;  
Drive earthquakes trembling from their central caves !  
Rage, rend, ye cloudy furies, venom spew !  
And thou magnificent and black abyss  
Which yawnest over me, disgorge thy floods,  
And blow thy fiery breath ; thou gaping earth  
Shut up thy ponderous rock-toothed jaws and crunch  
Cities and forests, and embowel them  
In thy huge carcase ; howl, and storm, and shriek,  
Ye elements, in internecine strife !  
I would that I might mingle in your broils,

As one of ye, and ease my stormy soul.  
But I, so strong in weakness, weak in strength,  
Can make no greater storm in which towhelm  
Mine own. How impotent am I ! how small !  
These portents bode some evil to the state,  
Or to these dogg'd and rebellious Jews.  
Naught bodeth ill to me. I am so ill  
In mine estate that I a portent am  
Unto myself, but can no evil find  
Sufficient to surcease mine endless ills.

V.

GARDEN OF THE PALACE.

SEXTUS.

SEXTUS.

AH me! She cometh not! Four cruel hours,  
In livery of hope, have held me racked  
On expectation, straining nerve from nerve,  
Till all the thews and sinews of my mind  
Are well-nigh broken, and I shall go mad.  
The terrors of this strange, terrific night  
Have moved me less than what I fear for her.  
Why cometh not? Morn openeth her eyes,  
Awakened by forerunners of the day,  
And through the western curtains of her couch  
Looketh inertly; wingèd messengers  
With clarion voice proclaim through all the world  
Her early rising. My love cometh not,  
And while she tarrieth all is night to me.  
Why not? Why not? Impatience, work thy will,  
And chase anxiety, which more tormenteth.  
Strange fears affright me which I fear to express.  
If rumour be not all compound of lies  
The queen is merciless. In ignorance

I impotently grope, with none to guide  
 My hands to pillars of uncertainty,  
 That I might throw them with a giant's grasp  
 And in their ruins slaughter all the doubts  
 Which worry and torture me. Why cometh not?

*Enter Salome.*

Ah ! she is there ! Ye gods ! how changed ! As like  
 Her former self as blight to blossom. Love,  
 What hast thou done ? What hath been done to thee ?  
 Where hast thou been ? Nay, speak to me, my life !  
 What hast thou seen ? Thy hands are cold, thy heart  
 Is almost still. Have terrors of this night  
 Chilled thee with horror ? froze the founts of life ?  
 Driven lips' speech to thine enfettered eyes  
 And held it captive there forced to proclaim  
 The one sense, horror, horror, horror ? Speak !  
 Yea, weep, and moan, and sigh and tremble ; weep,  
 And let thy tears dissolve the icy bonds  
 Which bind thy tongue and chain thy struggling heart

SALOME.

O Sextus !

SEXTUS.

Why these tears, these sobs and sighs  
 Which would wreck navies ? Weep and ease thy heart  
 Of overshadowing clouds ; but let some words  
 Come to the shore not drowned to make me know  
 Why thou dost moan, what the disaster, how  
 To succour thee.

SALOME.

Alas !

SEXTUS.

This telleth naught  
But that the weather is rough, the which I knew.  
There, there ; weep freely resting on my breast,  
As, rescued, on a beach the shipwrecked lie  
While briny seas flow from them. Speak, my love.

SALOME.

The gods pursue me !

SEXTUS.

Thou art dreaming, child.

SALOME.

Hast thou not seen their bolts this awful night ?

SEXTUS.

But they were not for thee ; the Jewish state  
Hath now outlived the patience of the gods  
And they do threaten it.

SALOME.

Nay, it is I ;  
They threaten me, and I am undone ! 'Tis just.

SEXTUS.

Whence this wild terror driving hence thy sense,  
Thy reason, trust, affection, yea thyself  
From this sweet palace of thy beauteous flesh  
And dwelling ruthless there where thou hast been,  
Like satyr in a city ravaged ?

## SALOME.

O Sextus, let me weep, nor question me.  
I dare not answer thee, for trust hath fled,  
And anguish driveth courage from the field.

## SEXTUS.

Salome, dost thou then distrust me? Thou!

## SALOME.

I did not say so, Sextus—did I say it?  
I know not what I say, I am fordone!  
To save thee I have lost thee.

## SEXTUS.

Lost me? Nay!  
Thou canst not lose me; thee will I not lose.

## SALOME.

I am already lost.

## SEXTUS.

The storm hath darked  
Thy pole star, reason, and thou wanderest.

## SALOME.

O Sextus, curse me not; my shattered bark  
Is sinking now with woe; not one hour tried  
Under my guidance when the tempest came  
Out of a summer sky on summer seas,  
And it is wrecked and driven so far, so far  
On furious oceans it can ne'er return

But now must drift alone till I am engulfed,  
Striving in vain to steer my way to haven.

## SEXTUS.

Salome, leave this mystic phrase and speak  
In plain, unstudied words that which thou meanest.

## SALOME.

Let me withdraw myself while strength remaineth,  
Nor make me make thee chase me from thy breast,  
That thou mayst weep for me and not abhor.

## SEXTUS.

Dost thou mistrust me when I should be strong,  
But trustest me in weakness ? Do me not  
This wrong to my poor manhood. I could wield  
Great Neptune's trident to put down the waves,  
At thy command, and drive the hostile winds  
Back to their caves, and bar them pinioned there.  
I'll be thy cure ; thy childish brain is crazed !

## SALOME.

Yea, I am crazed : think but that I am crazed,  
And that my hurried words are only clouds  
From a distempered sea and let them pass.  
This night indeed hath been an awful night,  
And fearful things were heard ; but fearfulest,  
Unseen, unfelt, unheard, except by me,  
The mysteries horrible which force me hence.

## SEXTUS.

Thou wouldst not go from me again ?

SALOME.

I must !

SEXTUS.

Whither ?

SALOME.

I cannot tell ; but I no more  
Shall see thee.

SEXTUS.

Oh ! thou provest me to know  
How much I love thee.

SALOME.

I would keep thy love,  
Therefore I part from thee. I could even bear,  
If time and purpose might excuse, to lift  
A suicidal hand against myself ;  
But cannot bear this fond desire I feel  
To tell thee all should crucify thy fondness,—  
Nay, nay, I cannot ! Love me always, Sextus !

SEXTUS.

I will, I will, I will. 'Tis said caprice  
Doth woman rule ; I know it hath no place  
In thee, but that thou art moved by subtle cause.  
Then let me see it ; I will run it through,  
And with a thrust of reason take its life.

SALOME.

Could I make known all I have heard and seen,  
Could I disclose to thee all I have done,  
And yet not drive thee shuddering from my side,

I would, while weeping tears of gratitude  
For such relief.

SEXTUS.

Naught can drive me from thee.

SALOME.

I have come to say farewell, and my poor heart  
Is breaking. Tell me not how thou wouldest guard,  
Guide, shelter, aid and love me, or, alas !  
I cannot leave thee.

SEXTUS.

And thou never shalt !

SALOME.

I love thee so much !

SEXTUS.

Goddess !

SALOME.

Hold me tight.

SEXTUS.

Closer than life !

SALOME.

One moment more.

SEXTUS.

For aye !

SALOME.

Now kiss me on mine eyes, and charm away  
That which doth haunt them. Dost thou love me still ?

SEXTUS.

Salome ! pity me ; what wouldest thou do ?

SALOME.

And thou wilt love me always ?

SEXTUS.

Naught by thee.

SALOME.

Thou wilt remember me when I am gone ?

SEXTUS.

Thou shalt not go ; imprisoned in these arms  
No power shall take thee thence, not even thine own.

SALOME.

I am already gone. That which thou holdest  
Is the last shadow of that which I was  
Passing away and mingling into night.  
Ah ! press me closer, nearer to thy heart.  
Another kiss for friendship, one for love,  
Another for forgiveness pardoning all,  
And so farewell, O heart, O life, farewell.

SEXTUS.

Salome ! I cannot entreat ; behold  
My silent anguish, let it plead for me.  
What can I say to thee more than I have said ?  
For when I said I loved thee I said all.  
I have wooed thee even so as best I could.  
I have wooed thee as a soldier, told my love

In straight-out phrase which hit its mark, unskilled  
With many words to weaken love's avow.  
My heart is strong enough to suffer strongly.  
I would 'twere weak enough to weakly break,  
So woo thee brokenly with broken words  
Out of my broken heart, and thus might break  
Thy too resolvèd purpose, which, too hard,  
Should easily be broken. I would say  
With such doubt-breaking truth I love thee thou  
Couldst doubt not. I cannot abase myself  
Using great oaths to swear that I do love ;  
Yet when I tell thee solemnly I love  
It is an oath itself the solemnst,  
Pledging mine honour to thine honoured trust.  
If thou dost doubt me of thyself 'tis well ;  
I'll doubt myself henceforth, and trust but thee.  
And having said this much, with naught to add,  
Will bow to thy decree as 'twere a god's.  
But if another have infused in thee  
Some loud suspicion or some whispering doubt  
I pray thee listen rather to the voice  
Of thine own justice and thine own pure heart ;  
For I am conscious of integrity,  
Nor may I guess by what disjuncture we  
Are to be separated, nor the cause.

## SALOME.

It is myself.—Oh, thou wilt break my heart !  
I never doubted thee. I love thee more  
Than words a maiden's tongue can find could tell  
Ah ! I am deadly—shudder not nor look  
On me with half-averted eyes nor loose

The pressure of thine arms when thou shalt know  
All what I have to tell.

## SEXTUS.

Let me hear all.

Nothing can change my love, for I am thine  
To watch and guard, to succour and to keep,  
To love thee until death. My word myself is.  
I have given thee my word. If woes assail,  
They are for me ; if blessings fall, for thee.  
Woes turned from thee by me for me are joys.  
Whether with thee, admitted to thy court,  
Or banished from thy presence, I shall be  
At all times blessed by this one consciousness,  
I am watching over thee.

## SALOME.

O noble soul !

'Tis I the exile, banished by mine act  
From kingdom, country, paradise, in thee.  
I am unclean ; a murderer accursed ;  
With all the curses of Orestes cursed.  
I have raised my hand against a man of God,  
And taken away his life. The gods avenge !  
O sacrilege ! O death ! O infamy !

## SEXTUS.

Alas ! alas ! I hear thee in a dream !

## SALOME.

What could I do ? To save thee, save thy life,  
I asked John Baptist's, thereunto compelled

By mine own mother ! And they brought his head :—  
'Tis there !—it smileth on me ! Blind mine eyes !  
O horrible ! alas ! O woe is me !

## SEXTUS.

Hush ! hush ! I am with thee ; there is naught to fear.

## SALOME.

I am abomination and must go  
To retransform myself by holy acts  
Of charity and self-denial, pains  
And fastings penitential, and so move  
His God to pity.

## SEXTUS.

Heart most generous !  
Thou dost all for me, bravest every risk,  
And I do naught for thee. Thy woman's strength  
Of magnanimity and fortitude  
Putteth all manhood's virtues to the blush.  
But think what thou wouldest do and do it not.

## SALOME.

Among his people is a vestal sect  
Founded by one unfortunate, like me,  
Unlike me, guiltless, Jephtha's doomèd child,  
Who gave herself to charitable deeds.  
And many maidens joined themselves to her  
And others unto them, in charity  
Seeking atonement, or relief from woes.  
Abjuring all that women hold most dear  
They live a benefaction to their race.  
Thus will I do, and thus atone my sin.

## SEXTUS.

Nay, be not so deceived ; thou hast no sin.  
 Nay, be not so unjust to thee and me.  
 Who acteth by compulsion acteth not ;  
 Not his the merit nor demerit. Thought  
 Is act before the gods who judge us. Act  
 Is but the body, thought the acting soul.  
 I cannot let thee do thyself this wrong.

## SALOME.

But I resisted not ; yea, yielding turned  
 Into a murderous sword a harmless style.  
 Of tablets innocent I made a block,  
 And thus, a traitress, took my master's life.  
 O horror ! O alas ! O infamy !  
 Nay, drive me from thee. I unworthy am  
 That thou shouldst look upon me or hear me speak.  
 Thou couldst not with Assassination wed,  
 Nor couldst hold Sacrilege in thine embrace.  
 The gods abhor me ! I abhor myself.  
 All nature shrieketh at and hideth from me.  
 Proscribed ! accursed ! O, woe is me ! alas !

## SEXTUS.

Ah ! cease this mourning, love ; thou wert constrained.

## SALOME.

I words have heard this night would blight an oak,  
 Cedars of Lebanon clothe with hues of death.  
 I have learned to pity me that I was born  
 And wonder that my blood teemeth not crime  
 Of its own natural action.

SEXTUS.

My poor child !

SALOME.

Nay, send me from thee. I can never be  
That which I was ; for stricken is the flower.  
The springs of joyousness, which gave the sap  
To youth, are dried, and cankered are my roots.  
Thou shalt find naught but blights upon me, blights.  
No verdure decketh branches ; pallid leaves  
Move lifeless in the breeze too soon to fall.  
Let me be prompt to loose thee from thy vows.  
My vows are dead, for she is dead who made them.  
I am not she—I know not who I am.  
But had I been myself I would have died  
Rather than shed the blood of that just man.  
Yet thus should I have been thy murderer.  
What could I do ? how turn ? O gods, have pity !

SEXTUS.

They will have pity ; calm thyself, my life.  
I will help thee ; we will each other help.

SALOME.

Where light shall go the shade of infamy  
Will rest upon my name, historians tell  
The history of this night to blacken me,  
And dying I shall live, by all abhorred.  
Yet when they shall condemn me, as they will,  
And shuddering breathe my name, when they must  
speak it,  
And use it for a curse, then say for me,

Salome was a woman pressed by fate  
 And overcome by fierce disaster ; say  
 She was a woman not more weak than others,  
 But that she was o'erpowered by fiercer foes ;  
 That calmest waters in her sea of life  
 Opened a whirlpool, and that she went down  
 In wilder tumults than Charybdis whirleth  
 To deeper depths ; she struggled as she could,  
 And struggling sank. She was more forced to sin  
 Than sinning ; yet was weak, and so was forced ;  
 But, mourning what she has done, could not again  
 Do otherwise. That she was like her sex,  
 Too strong for weakness and too weak for strength.  
 And, thus excusing her to injustice, say,  
 In the great court of human prejudice  
 She prayed consideration of her woes.

## SEXTUS.

O noble heart ! O courage most sublime !  
 Oh, let me win thee from this cursed belief.

## SALOME.

My heart is breaking ; naught can bind it up.  
 I love thee so I would not have thee suffer.  
 And yet didst thou not suffer I should be  
 In tenfold misery. Nay, be not sad—  
 It is the will of God ; we must submit.

## SEXTUS.

Salome ! wilt thou surely leave me thus ?  
 Hast thou preserved me from oblivion  
 To put me in the flood with Tantalus ?

To make me live knowing that thou dost live,  
 But that I ne'er can see thee, speak to thee,  
 Console thee in thy grief, nor hear thee speak,  
 Quenching the thirst unquenchable of love  
 By assurance that thou lovest, giving me  
 The holy right to kiss away thy tears ?  
 Salome ! O Salome ! think of this—  
 How lonely, lifeless, woe-begone the world !

## SALOME.

Sextus, thy words have ta'en from me my will,  
 And I am feeble as a little child,  
 Am torn in twain by duty and desire.  
 I cannot stay with thee, it were the price  
 Of my great crime ; for when she urged me on  
 The queen consented that I should be thine.

## SEXTUS.

Thus from the very gates of Elysium,  
 For which we have toiled so long, endured so much,  
 Prayed waiting, hoping, longing, weeping, nay,  
 Ready to take the battlements by storm,  
 Thou castest me to torments by a word.

## SALOME.

I know not how to leave thee ; gods exact  
 The sacrifice and they will give me strength.  
 I never loved thee as I love thee now.  
 I never knew before the depth of joy  
 To feel thine arms protecting, holding me ;  
 To hear thy voice dispelling all alarm  
 And filling me with calmness, making life

One joy concentrated of every joy.  
Yet, ere the sun shake from his glittering locks  
The gleaming dust caught from his golden pillow  
I must be far beyond the city walls.  
When cometh weeping night with dewy tears  
And the sad nightingale mourneth her mate  
Then will I dare to weep for thee and me,  
Nor fear to sin in feeling such regrets  
As our first mother felt when forth she went  
From Paradise, as I have heard relate,  
Since such regrets are my great punishment.

## SEXTUS.

Salome ! this is death, long, living death !

## SALOME.

Dawn moveth on before the coming day.  
I dare not longer tarry, fare thee well.  
The gods preserve thee, gods almighty bless,  
Comfort and counsel thee, Sextus, my love,  
My life, my hope, my future, present, past.  
Abhor me not, farewell—farewell—farewell.

VI.

THE QUEEN'S CHAMBER.

HERODIAS WITH JOHN BAPTIST'S HEAD.

HERODIAS.

At length I am avenged ! Drink, drink, my soul,  
The sweet conviction, drink till thou be drunk !  
The king, smitten of God before his time,  
Eaten alive of worms, in torment howleth,  
Calleth for death that cometh not, shall not come,  
Till all the horrors of the sepulchre,  
The rodent maggots and slow-feeding fires  
Which open their dull phosphorescent eyes  
Only in darkness, putrefaction black,  
And stifling mould, that shooteth creeping roots  
And groweth forests crushing flesh to dust,  
Shall in his life be felt. His body thus  
Not dying but consumed, his soul shall go  
Swift to black Hades and Tartarian woe.  
Salome, from the world self-banishèd,  
Seeketh to find her exile in the world,  
And by self-punishment to make amends,  
Self-judging, self-accused, and ignorant  
That man may pray and pray and still be damned,

May practise charity and still be damned,  
Inflict self-punishment and still be damned ;  
Forgetful that, if there be real offence,  
The offended power alone can name the price  
Of full forgiveness. "Tis her fantasy,  
Led on by virtue—virtue is such a fool !  
And thou, sweet head, yea, thou art mine at last !  
What ! thou canst yet smile while I speak to thee ?  
I thought my voice, like a storm-breeding wind,  
Would chase that smile away and gather frowns  
To flash their lightnings from thy brow of heaven.  
I would have mingled all thy blood with mine  
And sent it forth in such heaven-daring life  
That e'en Prometheus in comparison  
Should fail in enterprise, and all the Titans  
Pigmies and poltroons show ; could that not be  
I would have given all my blood to thee.  
But thou disdainedst me ! These smiling lips  
Have spoken the only words I ever heard  
Since tearful Innocence bade me good-bye  
A weary time ago, could make the life  
Mount from my heart to watch-towers of my cheeks  
To see who thus so loudly summoned it.  
Thou hast paid the penalty of thy disdain.  
Where was thy God ? Could He not save thee ? Eh ?  
Is there then aught a woman may not do ?  
Now will I even defy thy God Himself,  
And in His temple will I make my bed,  
And on His altar will dream dreams of thee,  
My sweet ! Some living semblance of thyself—  
What ! thou dost frown at last ? 'Tis thine old trick  
When I did meet thee. "Twill not fright me now

Nor turn me back, nor make me hold my tongue.  
Thou threatenedst me with judgment and with hell,  
Yet thou art mine ! I can embrace thee even,  
And weave my lily fingers in thy hair,  
And stroke thy temples, fondle thee, and hate !  
Recall thyself to life and list to me  
While here I mock thee, spurn thee, spit on thee.  
Why liest thou there ? What ! wouldst thou plead to me ?  
Ah ! thou art very pale ; where is the health  
Which blossomed like a garden in thy face  
And brought forth manly beauty ? Where the flush  
Of indignation or of shame whenever  
I spoke to thee ? Eh ? Let me call it back  
With acts would shame the satyrs in their dens.  
It cometh not ! What ? Thy proud virtue sleepeth  
And all the blushes which have guarded it  
Are melted by their own inherent fire  
And dribble down to cool in this flat dish.  
In spite of thee I play among thy roses,  
Restore them thus to abdicated thrones  
On pale cheeks, yea, on this majestic brow,  
Or call them up with mine all-potent kiss.  
Come, let me taste thy virtuous, scornful lips—

## A VOICE.

Go to thy place !

## HERODIAS.

Oh ! horror ! life ! Oh ! death !

## VII.

A WOOD.

SALOME.

SALOME.

HERE will I rest until my maidens come  
To mourn with me. In voiceless solitudes,  
Where love and longing to behold create  
A presence sensible of the beloved,  
I shall, henceforth alone, not be alone.  
Yet is this presence to my conscious heart  
As circumambient mist to thirsty souls,  
The intangible presentment of their wish.  
Alas ! I never more may look for showers,  
Nor dews, nor springs, nor rivulets nor lakes ;  
But far before me to the vast and dim,  
The infinite of space, a desert drear  
Stretcheth interminable ; scorching sands  
Return the glare of a more scorching sun  
And sluggish winds, as hot and tainting breath  
Of sleeping monsters, burn and blast my cheek.  
I'll go to deeper shade and solitude ;  
For deepest solitude is solitude  
Least deep for me, since I am so dissolved

To unsubstantial being by the void  
 Of beings substantive and sensible  
 That with the unsubstantial forms of love  
 I may hold converse ; my reality  
 Thus disappearing, they are real to me,  
 And I am still with him who is love to me.  
 Here will I rest while o'er my head the trees,  
 Hoary with moss, hold out their trembling hands,  
 And pray for me, like low-voiced priests at prayer,  
 While in the dale the self-amusing brook,  
 In reverence leaving leaps from stone to stone,  
 Slow, softly and solemnly goeth on sand.  
 The birds have ceased their earlier morning songs,  
 And listening with bent heads and folded wings  
 Say amen and amen from time to time.  
 Prayer dwelleth in this place ; the gods are near.  
 O God, behold mine utter helplessness,  
 Have pity on mine utter worthlessness,  
 Redeem me from mine utter guiltiness,  
 And give me of thine utter righteousness.

*Enter a Stranger.*

STRANGER.

Lorn damsel !

SALOME.

Sir !

STRANGER.

Thou weepest ; wherefore ?

SALOME.

Alas !

STRANGER.

Say, wherefore weepest thou ?

SALOME.

I am lost ! I am lost !

STRANGER.

In this dark wood ?

SALOME.

In darkness of a wood  
Where by my coming all the air is dead.  
The innocent trees aghast all shuddering stand  
And would avoid me but relentless roots  
Hold them to bear the horror of my sight  
And feel the torment of my loathsome presence.

STRANGER.

Hath no one pitied thee ?

SALOME.

Me ? No one can.  
I have accursed myself, and I must wander  
Forever and forever seeking light  
But never finding it. Or in the wood,  
Or in the city's streets or crowded courts,  
In an illumined palace or dark cell  
I have the terror of great darkness on me.  
My crimes give forth most suffocating blackness  
As suns give brightness forth. My doom is just.

STRANGER.

Even of the tomb the darkness shall be bright.

SALOME.

I am oppressed with sense of grievous guilt,  
Nor can I find surcease nor know I where  
To turn for help or comfort ; here, condemned,  
I seek a way to expiate my sin  
While conscience, restless, will not let me rest,  
Approveth naught, and will not let me choose.

STRANGER.

There is a Way.

SALOME.

What is it ? Where ?

STRANGER.

The Truth.

SALOME.

And what can guide me into it ?

STRANGER.

The Light.

SALOME.

I am lost ! I am lost !

STRANGER.

One hath come to save the lost.

SALOME.

Ah ! my offence is registered in heaven.

STRANGER.

Atoning blood can wash the record out.

STRANGER.

What is the sacrifice?

STRANGER.

The Lamb of God.

SAVAGE.

One whom I dare not name will tell me of Him.

STRANGER.

Saviour, nor the blood of beasts or birds,  
 Nor penitential pains and misery  
 Could ever atone for man's abounding sin.  
 But while he was prostrated and on his way  
 To dreadful dungeons of eternal debt  
 God pitied him so much He sent His Son  
 To lift the bar and over prison doors  
 For whomsoever would believe on Him  
 Such persist not but have eternal life.

SAVAGE.

Where is the Son that I may seek and find Him?

STRANGER.

He is the Lamb of God; believest thou?

SAVAGE.

I would believe; but, thou mine unbelief.

STRANGER.

The children shall not for the parents die;

Each for himself shall bear iniquity,  
The Christ for all who will come unto Him.

SALOME.

I will come to Him ; He can cleanse me wholly.

STRANGER.

Thy faith hath saved thee ; thou mayst go in peace.

SALOME.

May I not follow Him ?

STRANGER.

Thou shalt ; but learn  
That they best follow Him who best fulfil  
Their duties to their race as God ordained,  
Loving their neighbour even as themselves  
And God with all their heart, and soul, and mind ;  
By being true to those whom God hath bound  
In clusters with them on the vine of life.  
Not in the literal and formal act  
With due observance of religious rites  
And many words professing Him as Lord  
Is He best followed. They who follow Him  
In spirit and in truth best follow Him ;  
And they shall be the favourites of His fold,  
And He shall know them though the world do not,  
And He will love them. They shall keep His words  
Which, grafted in them, spring to endless life.  
Who thus shall follow Him shall ne'er taste death.

**SALOME.**

The Truth I feel ; it is revealed by thee,  
The Light thou sheddest hath enlightened me,  
If thou wilt go before I see the Way,  
Let me walk with thee lest I go astray.

## VIII.

### GARDEN OF THE PALACE.

SEXTUS *and* ANTONIUS.

ANTONIUS.

WHAT ! Sextus ! what ! Dost sleep ? Arouse thee, man !  
The dawn hath climbed the heavens and, one by one  
Plucked the ripe stars. Thou shouldst ere now have  
filled

Thy garner full of sleep and harvested  
Thy rest. Wilt thou away with me to Rome ?

SEXTUS.

To Rome ? Yea, anywhere ; let's go at once.

ANTONIUS.

What aileth thee ? Wherefore this pallor strange ?  
This recklessness of haste ? Why hangst thou out  
Those signals of distress on either lid ?  
Why burn those cresting beacons on each cheek ?

SEXTUS.

I am a coward—cowards may shed tears.  
I have been wounded.

## ANTONIUS.

That is plain as truth.  
No blood is left in thee. Those ruddy lakes  
On either side the mountain ridge of thy face,  
Which glowed with roseate sheen beneath thine orbs  
Have all run out and left pale, empty beds ;  
And there is not fire enough in thy dull eyes  
To light a maiden's fumbling lips to thine.  
Say, hast thou watched in vain ? Hath she not come ?  
Or hath the storm unhinged thy youthful wits ?

## SEXTUS.

The storm ? What storm ? Ah, true, I mind me now.  
How went the storm abroad ? What hast thou seen ?

## ANTONIUS.

More wonders than portended Cæsar's death.  
In heaven two stars came from the almighty throne.  
The first was brighter than the brightest star ;  
The second, brighter than the sun at noon,  
Followed the first a little way behind.  
The first in form a man ; the second God.  
A gliding meteor whirled around the first,  
And drew it from its seat and put it out.  
Then all the planets gathered to one place  
And lifted up the second on a cross  
Which spanned the heavens and covered the whole earth.  
And when the second bowed its head and failed  
Deep darkness filled the entire universe  
And all the shivering stars in heaven were quenched.

## SEXTUS.

What might this mean ?

## ANTONIUS.

I know not ; these are signs  
Beyond my comprehension. In the womb  
Of destiny some monstrous chronicle  
Throeing the world is struggling for its birth.  
And there were sounds of voices in the air  
Like sounds of oceans teased by wanton winds ;  
The earth with ague shook and gasped with pain.

## SEXTUS.

I heard them ; they portend no good to us.

## ANTONIUS.

The night was savage, freshly come from chaos ;  
The wild winds sobbed like wailing goddesses,  
Lifted their voices, tore their cloudy hair,  
While fires burned pale in the black firmament.  
Just now a Jewish soldier of the guard,  
Half dead with fear, recounted unto me  
The things which he had seen. The donjon shook  
And quivered with a murmur to its base ;  
While in the temple of these restless Jews  
The ever-burning fires went out ; the graves  
Of prophets oped and hoary they came forth  
And o'er the city stretched their bounden hands  
In silence weeping ; then in awful state  
Of ghostly apparition they moved on,  
Like white clouds passing through the midnight air,

In weird procession toward the donjon tower.  
Above the topmost turrets of the keep  
A flame arose and disappeared in heaven.  
The ghostly forms once more stretched forth their hands  
Over the city, turning every way,  
And with one voice a simultaneous woe  
Pronounced, which wailing, and reverberating died  
In thunder as they slowly vanish'd.  
Upon the temple's highest tower appeared  
A form of fire, which held a blazing sword  
And brandished it in mazy lightning strokes  
Toward Mount Sion ; in the clouds he faded.  
Like wolds lamenting and the ocean's moan  
Sounded afar his flaming chariot wheels.  
Sure these are signs enough to shake the nerves  
Of older men than thou, and conjure fear  
From coward hiding-places. If thou fearest—

## SEXTUS.

I fear? Thou know'st not what thou sayest—I fear?  
Yea, truly—I fear myself—I will not boast  
My courage ; it is gone. I am afraid.  
Antonius, spare me thy railly  
And I will tell thee all.

## ANTONIUS.

Tell me, my friend.

I do divine it now ; but tell it me,  
And thou shalt see I have a heart can feel,  
As well as hide its tenderest, bitterest part.

## SEXTUS.

I ne'er shall see Salome more.

## ANTONIUS.

Alas !

Thou couldst not profit by experience  
Of mine ; I gladly would have saved thee this.  
Women are learning always ; they would know  
How tasteth the forbidden and unknown.  
Therefore are they not constant. Constancy  
Content is idle, handleth but one book,  
Spoileth its freshness, noteth not its text,  
Instead, reciteth fond imaginings  
Engendered by its title and fair outside,  
And dieth dully and happily ignorant.  
Who would the secret place of knowledge find  
Peruseth lineaments of many volumes.  
Its contents known each one is put aside.  
Thus women read us as a library,  
And thus they know our weakness and our strength  
Better than we ourselves. Nay, be a man,  
Nor let me see in thee another wreck  
Foundered on quicksands of inconstancy.

## SEXTUS.

Oh, she is constant as the constant tides  
Whose ardour centuries of failures cool not,  
But, still as eager as on the first day  
When they were driven back from kissing heaven,  
They upward leap with panting, foaming lips,  
Up to embrace the sky, as hounds in leash  
Held back and dragged away to come again.  
She is verily constant, but the destinies  
By her too tender conscience drag her hence.  
They have taken her away, and now she goeth,

Led from me, looking back and mourning still.  
Hence, hence with me and I will tell thee all  
I will recover to that art misery.  
Its cause, its fashion and its hopelessness.  
But this thou shalt believe, that she is constant.

## ANTONIUS.

I will when I believe that fire is cold.  
Ice hot, sun night, night noon, an arrant thief  
A safe companion for an honest man,  
Or honesty is kept in beauteous caskets.  
Then will I think also that honesty  
Is cased in woman. Fie ! thou art like one  
Who standing in a furnace crieth out  
Consumed by royning flames, and yet who sweareth  
Not his fire burneth, though all others may ;  
Therefore will he not budge. Come with me now.  
I have a daughter, if she liveth still,  
Should have the age of thine absconded love.  
She had her name, a name most dear to me.  
She should be beautiful ; her mother was ;  
She should be good—I dare not think on that.  
My heart yearneth toward her,—she is good.  
I go Romeward to find her, if I can.  
If she be living and be worthy thee,  
As grant the gods she may, and ye can love  
When thou, more wise than I, shalt have been cured  
Of this poor torturing fever killing not,  
Then she is thine as wife ; if not as wife,  
Why then as sister. Thou shalt be my son.  
We will together live, and our round world,  
Ourselves alone, shall be a trinity.

## SEXTUS.

I never can forget to love Salome,  
 Nor yet remember e'er to love another.  
 But I will go with thee, I will go with thee.

*Enter Herodias with chorus of Attendants, Romans  
 and Jews.*

Behold the queen !

## ANTONIUS.

The queen ! sayest thou ? the queen ?  
 The queen I never saw—and yet—and yet—  
 Ye gods immortal ! It is Livia !  
 A guilty counterpart of the innocent self !  
 Could not ten chilling years have numbed my heart  
 And with their tempests worn her image out ?  
 Made powerless blood which beateth insurrection,  
 And hardened sinews which do fail me now ?

## HERODIAS.

Revenged ! revenged ! revenged !—Go to thy place !

CHORUS, *Romans and Jews.*

Gone are the signs in the heavens !  
 Gone are the sails !  
 Gone is the rudder !  
 Tossed and beaten of waves !  
 Tossed and fearfully driven !  
 Stranded ! stranded the vessel !

## HERODIAS.

Go to thy place ! aha ! go to thy place !

CHORUS, *Romans and Jews.*

Reason is whelmed by the tempest,  
 Light of the stars is hidden by clouds of despair !  
 Night cometh dark from the dreadful regions of madness !

## HERODIAS.

Where is Salome ? Ha ! I am revenged !

CHORUS, *Romans and Jews.*

Charmed by revenge,  
 Bound in its folds and writhing,  
 Writhing, stung and maddened to frenzy.

## ANTONIUS.

Salome ! ah ! Salome ! She is my child !  
 Where is she, Sextus ? Fetch her, bring her here !  
 I'll seek her, find her ! Sextus, sluggard ! come !  
 Where is my child, my daughter, all my world ?  
 I tell thee I must have her !

## SEXTUS.

Ask the gods  
 To give her back-; she is a vestal.

## ANTONIUS.

Nay !  
 I'll not believe it, Nay ! Ye gods ! Ye gods !  
 Exhaust your thunderbolts upon my head,  
 Empty your quivers, send me all your plagues  
 In this most rueful moment of my life,  
 My life most rueful, crush with maledictions

And in oblivion let me now forget  
That ye hold maledictions still for me.—  
I tell thee I will have her ! Jove himself  
Shall rival me in vain ! She is my child !  
All I have but disasters.

## SEXTUS.

No more thine.

She is lost to us, driven hence, herself accursed  
By that arch-hatcher of conspiracies  
Her mother.

## ANTONIUS.

Livia again ! Just gods !  
What train of curses doth he take who taketh  
A wanton wife ! Oh ! I would rather be  
Chained to Prometheus's rock, my vitals eaten  
By vultures daily ; have my breath consumed  
By noisome stench of Harpies ; rather lie  
With Typhon roaring under Etna's flames,  
Or in the flood with Tantalus be burned  
By deathless thirst, or with Ixion chained  
By brazen bands upon a fiery wheel ;  
Rather with Sisyphus toil all my days  
Than wed with such a wife, more rich in ills  
Than was Pandora. Yet, whate'er he do  
Who thus is wed, Jove, spare thy thunderbolts,  
He is punished in advance. And yet—and yet—  
I love her, Sextus ; how I love her still !  
The shame I feel for loving cannot drive  
Love from my heart, nor can the misery  
Which she hath caused me. Stay, stay yet a space,  
While I take my last look and so sum up

My life ; then straightway will I forth with thee  
To seek my child. If we shall find her, well ;  
If not, to search is all that now is left me.  
And if I find her not I may find Death,  
The next best, dearest friend. Ah ! I was strong,  
And when I had a daughter I was brave.  
Now am I weak and have no courage left.

## HERODIAS.

Toads all of them ; not even food for serpents.

## ANTONIUS.

Ye gods, give back my child, O give her back !  
I have grown old while still in my full prime.  
Look at my hair, is it not white with age ?  
No ill can touch me now ; I am ill proof.  
I could defy the vengeance of the Diræ  
To make me feel afflictions. I am benumbed  
With them ; and this, this last, so rude, so fell  
Hath changed me from a target for misfortunes  
To a misfortune, and henceforth I go  
Mixed with calamities as one of them,  
Without intent and without malice cursing.

## HERODIAS.

Why lookst thou so at me ! Am I a sea  
From which thy suns draw showers ? Am I the sun  
That thus thine eyes run o'er like lakes in spring  
When melt the frozen snows ? I am avenged !

## ANTONIUS.

Nay, Livia, speak to me ; know'st me not ?

*HERODIAS.*

Nay,—yea,—thou art the witch who long ago  
Stole my Antonius—Go ! go thy ways.  
Hast seen Antonius?—Antonius—  
Who called me Livia? Ha, ha, revenged !

*ANTONIUS.*

Look on my face ; I have seen Antonius.

*HERODIAS.*

Ah, then I pity him ; thou art the beast  
Which black malignity begot on folly.  
Well thou resemblest on thy mother's side  
Antonius, for he left me alone.

*ANTONIUS.*

Avenging gods ! What punishment is hers !

*HERODIAS.*

The witch doth mutter ; go thy ways, witch, go ;  
I shall be damned and thy hard mistress soon.  
And when I am damned I'll burn thee, tear thy hair.  
Yea, go thy ways, witch, go and mock me not.

*SEXTUS.*

The gods have mercy !—This is terrible !

*HERODIAS.*

Hush ! hush ! there spoke the king of newts and toads.  
He croaketh badly. I have seen his majesty  
I' th' mud, I' th' mud. Croak me a song, good king ;  
'Tis something worse than dirge for me to die by.

ANTONIUS.

Ah ! Livia ! is this the fearful end ?

HERODIAS.

End ! Nay ! 'Tis the beginning ; go, begone,  
For thou the essence of damnation art,  
And let me not be forced to swallow thee  
Before my time. I'll find thee soon in Hades.

SEXTUS.

It is the retribution of the gods !

HERODIAS.

Thou hast seen Antonius ? I know thee now.  
Thou art the fury fell who drove him hence  
Come back to mock me. I will pinch thee for it ;  
I'll pinch thee, pinch thee, pinch thee—Give me air !

ANTONIUS.

Alas ! my bleeding heart ! bleed on ! bleed on !

HERODIAS.

The fury whispereth ; send the fury hence,  
Or burn her till she bring Antonius—  
I want to see him, see him ere I die.  
O woe ! O woe ! O horror ! life ! O death !

CHORUS, *Romans and Jews.*

The dark-handed angel ! The dark-handed angel  
Darkly he cometh from dark caves of life,  
Lifteth the weight of humanity's burdens,

Lifteth the terrible woe of humanity ;  
Deepest and dimmest of mysteries  
Hidden by mysteries dimmest and deepest,  
Beareth man on his noiseless wings  
To mysteries dimmer and deeper.

## HERODIAS.

He cometh there ! I feel his fingers pierce  
Into my throat !—Unhand me, Death !—Away !

SEMI-CHORUS, *Romans.*

From the blissful moments, islands of bliss  
Resting enchanted amid the billows of life,  
Over the wavelets of time  
That cease to move for a space  
To linger upon the shores,  
The shores of those islands of bliss,  
Cometh thin vapour and mists and the herald concealed,  
Sent by the gods in the haze of joy and of rapture.

## HERODIAS.

To ask forgiveness—'tis a coward's act ;  
I'll go down cursing, and defy the gods.

SEMI-CHORUS, *Romans.*

Noiseless he treadeth the waves, nor rustle his garments.  
Suddenly changeth his raiment !  
Blackness enshroudeth him !  
Billows beneath his shade grow dark and appalling  
Lost are the islands of bliss !  
Lost is the light of the skies !  
Lost is the land !

Over the black waves of time,  
 Terrible, wildly and swiftly now rolling,  
 Huge and frowning and awful the cloud of death moveth.

## HERODIAS.

Say, what wouldst thou with me ?—Oh ! Give me air !  
 Revenged ! I'll be upon the gods avenged !

CHORUS, *Romans and Jews.*

Death spreadeth darkly above thee,  
 Descendeth, descendeth upon thee  
 Suffocating ! suffocating ! ah !  
 Joys have fled from thine arms,  
 Pleasures have fled,  
 Terrors hold thee in their talons !

## HERODIAS.

Thy boat ! thy boat ! Charon, I come ! I come !

SEMI-CHORUS, *Jews.*

Sure is the justice of God,  
 Awfully stern its decrees ;  
 Patience restraineth its hand  
 Till the day be passed, till the evening.

## HERODIAS.

The fiend doth beckon me—go ye aside.  
 I'll in with him, and o'er the fires of hell  
 Brew curses for ye all—away ! away !  
 Torment me not before my time ; away !

SEMI-CHORUS, *Jews.*

Sold in the days of its beauty and strength unto evil  
 For lust and ambition and passion and power  
 Lingering still upon earth,  
 Hideous and writhing, the soul is already with devils.

## HERODIAS.

Ye'll chase me, will ye? Ye will send me hence?  
 I will return and lead the damned in troops  
 To be revenged on ye—nay, give me air.  
 The steam of hell doth choke me—give me air!

CHORUS, *Romans and Jews.*

Swiftly the soul approacheth its prison,  
 The caverns of burning remorse,  
 Where its impotent hate,  
 Despairing, shall foam with impotent ragings.

## HERODIAS.

The ways grow dark—devils and furies, ho!  
 What! light your torches and receive your queen!  
 Let me not grope in silence down to hell  
 But come with swift descent and loud acclaim.

CHORUS, *Romans and Jews.*

Darker and darker the way,  
 Fires of Hades illume not;  
 Night broodeth there and its light is the blackness of  
 darkness.  
 Slow to the doer of evil  
 Seemeth his course to destruction;

Silent his thundering way and the storms that surround  
him ;  
Fain would he hasten his steps,  
Fain would he publish his infamy wider.

## HERODIAS.

What ! ho ! up, guards of hell and seneschal !  
Down with your drawbridge ! Call your warders out !  
Summon your princes to their loftiest hall !  
Your mistress usher as meriteth her state !

CHORUS, *Romans and Jews.*

Watchmen watch from towers of hell forever,  
Princely messengers with flaming wings invite,  
Princes wait in state for proud and powerful,  
Weak and mean, and rich and poor alike.  
Its drawbridge ever is down,  
Ever its gates are open,  
Ever its warders are ready.  
Enemies approach not ;  
Dreading no foes,  
It feareth no hostile invasion.

## HERODIAS.

'Tis darker still ; the devils then are dead,  
The fires of hell gone out, the furies sleep.  
I'll wake them, light their fires, and send them forth.  
Nothing in hell shall sleep when I am there.

SEMI-CHORUS, *Romans.*

Sleepless is Evil and sleep  
Cannot abide, but fleeth in terror its presence.

---

Sleep is the couch of the just, at night their health-giving garment ;  
Sleep the reward of the gods to the pure and the gentle of spirit.

HERODIAS.

I come ! I come ! world, for a space, good-night.  
Hail ! Pluto, hail ! infernal horrors ! hail !

*Dies.*

SEMI-CHORUS, *Jews.*

Thus, alone and revengeful and raging,  
Goeth the soul to blackest perdition  
When the Lord is despised and contemned,  
When His servants are mocked and abusèd.

ANTONIUS.

So farewell, Livia, alas ! alas !

CHORUS, *Romans and Jews.*

Out of the vast and the dim, the hall of his star-pillared palace,  
Steppeth the sun in its strength ; he taketh his bow and his quiver.  
Filled is his quiver with days, and bound together with ages.  
Shaketh he light from his locks ; he girdeth mists flaming about him,  
Taketh an arrowy day and bendeth his bow the electric.  
Swiftly, far, gleaming and sharp the shaft skims the airy abysses,  
Redly it quivereth in earth, and sheddeth its light o'er the waters.

---

Night, with beneficent shade, and with dewy balm and  
with slumber,  
Cometh on silvery wings and withdraweth the light-  
giving arrow,  
Wrappeth the earth in its mantle and cooileth the wound  
and the fever,  
Placeth the languishing earth in oblivion sweetly to  
slumber.  
So from the light-giving hand of the mighty Creator,  
Life-Giver,  
Speedeth the arrowy life and quivereth in man for a  
season ;  
So still, beneficent Death withdraweth the feverous  
arrow,  
Giveth the longed-for repose and envelopeth man in its  
shadow.

THE END.





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